

# MoNSTER!™

INTERNATIONAL



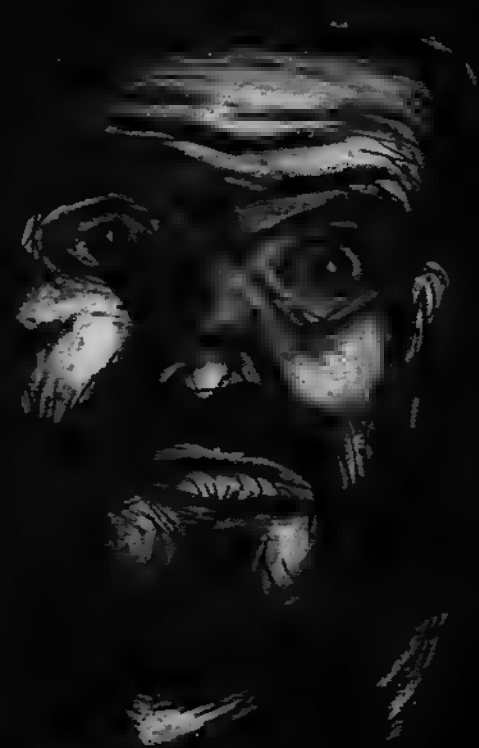
A KRONOS MAGAZINE NO. 3 \$5.95



**JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS**

**1963-1993**

**1963-1993**



**ZÉ DO CAIXÃO**



JULIAN MATEOS  
MARIAN SALGADO

# LA EDMONADA

FERNANDO SANCHO • LONE FLEMING  
ANGEL DEL POZO

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# MONSTER!

INTERNATIONAL

A KRONOS PUBLICATION

## JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS

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# BON APPETITE!

Creeping, crawling, belly low to the ground, the third installment of the *Monster! International* saga stalks an unbeliever who still scoffs at the idea that the magazine is a retro-creature only able to fathom films older than its editor. The beast squirms around its prey - a lone movie buff lost in the world. The pitiful victim pleads for his life and reaches for the sanctuary of the newest issue of *Fangoria*. "Please, don't hurt me! How can I comprehend a dossier on José Mojica Marins? I mean, look, the guy hasn't been in the film scene for ages."

"He's the Brazilian bogeyman," the magazine answers and gives the wining human a squeeze, "However, in this case you're wrong! Sure, Marins hasn't had any of his films legally released in the United States until this year, and of those films they are ones he made almost thirty years ago. Zé do Caixão is still making movies - grosser and nastier than what Hollywood has attempted to do lately. That much is true. There is more to the tale," *Monster!* nibbles an ear off the human.

"Ouch!" the victim yells, "But what of all this other stuff? 'Possession Flicks' from the 70's? I know that decade is back in vogue. I read *The Voice*, *Interview*, *Spin*, and all the hip 'zines and I have my fashionable belt bottoms and shades - but, hell, **THE EXORCIST** was twenty years ago. Why not review **JURASSIC PARK** instead? Who can relate to Italian or Spanish horror films when next to none are released over here anymore? Give me a break! You reviewed **DEMONI 3**, and that film has yet to set foot in the U.S.! And Franco's **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS**? What's the deal? Isn't Dave DeCoteau or any of those other American filmmakers active? Why not review Full Moon direct-to-video stuff?

Huh?" The human begins flipping through the pages of his latest splatter fanzine and cries: "LOOK!" He shoves the flimsy 'zine in *Monster!*'s face, "There are tons of new films out there - all covered by at least a dozen of these xerox things!!! What right have you to present **THE MARK OF THE WITCH**, **SPACE MONSTER** and **THE JOHNSTOWN MONSTER** as new matter for the consumer to read? This old stuff is crap! I want to hear about a new Argento film! I want to see tons of blood and brains! I want full-color shot of guts and ..."

"Shut up, little man," *Monster!* growls, "What do you know about film history? How can you judge what is made today if you know nothing about what preceded it? What a fool you are."

Then *Monster!* bites his head off.

## NEXT ISSUE

It's the wild world of monsters and chicks when *Monster! International* and *Highball Magazine* join at the pelvis to bring you this weird and wacky blood and semen spectacular. Watch for this double-backed beast by the end of this year! Pre-order your copy today for \$6.95 plus \$2.00 postage (USA), \$6.95 plus \$3.50 (Canada & Mexico), and \$6.95 plus \$4.75 (overseas, Air Mail). Make your check or money order (in US funds) to: Kronos Productions. Thanks!

## KEY TO CREDIT ABBREVIATIONS

### Titles

*Monster! International* lists in **BOLD CAPITALS** feature film titles in their original language and in authorized English versions. As for the latter, priority is given in the following order: (1) first U.S. theatrical release title; (2) U.S. TV release title; (3) U.S. video release title; (4) official international title in English (supplied by the production company); (5) title given in Great Britain or other English-speaking countries. When no authorized English title for a foreign film exists, an unofficial translation is provided in lower case, in parentheses. In filmographies, original titles in different producing countries are provided, as well as all known alternate titles in English. Film series and TV shows are listed in *italics*.

### Credits

*Monster! International* supplies basic credits for all movies reviewed. Monster movies (and, by extension, horror, science fiction and fantasy items) listed in filmographies warrant full credits, a plot synopsis and critical comments. To save space without sacrificing information, the following system of abbreviations is adopted:

[...]: title translation (with no official standing). *p.t.*: title during production. *exp.t.*: export title, if different from U.S. release title. *GB.t.*: British release title, if different from U.S. theatrical title. *US.t.*: U.S. theatrical release title. *US TV/video title*: U.S. television/video title, if different from theatrical release title.

*anim.*: animation director. *art d.*: art director. *as d.*: first assistant director. *cam.*: camera operator. *cast.*: main cast. *choreo.*: choreographer. *co-d.*: co-director. *color cons.*: color consultant. *cost.*: costume designer. *d.*: director. *dial.*: dialog director. *dist.*: distributor. *ed.*: film editor. *electr.*: electrician. *light.*: lighting director. *m.*: music composer. *music rec.*: music recording. *opt. ph.*: optical cinematography. *opt. print.*: optical printing. *p.*: producer. *pas.*: production assistant. *p.co.*: production company. *p.des.*: production designer. *ph.*: director of photography. *pmgr.*: production manager. *prop.*: property master. *rt.*: running time. *sc.*: screenwriter. *script sup.*: script supervisor (continuity). *sd.*: sound recordist. *sd ed.*: sound editor. *sd fx.*: sound effects. *sd mix.*: sound mixer. *2nd unit d.*: second unit director. *set dec.*: set decorator. *spfx.*: special effects. *sp.mech fx.*: special mechanical effects. *spopt fx.*: special optical effects. *sp ph fx.*: special photographic effects. *tech cons.*: technical consultant. *titles.*: opening titles designer.

Combined terms: *add.*: additional. *as.*: assistant. *assoc.*: associate. *cons.*: consultant. *coord.*: coordinator. *des.*: designer. *exec.*: executive. *sup.*: supervisor.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**BETSY BURGER**: Sexy, sassy spillire behind this issue's cover and spokesmodel for *Highball Magazine*. Betsy's purple prose recently soiled the sleeve of the **MONO MEN**'s essential instrumental *Shut Up!* recording.

**STEVE FENTONE**: The masked mastermind behind the incomparable *Panicos*, the final word on South-of-the-border Cinemadness and the now legendary *Tame*.

**LYNDAL FERGUSON**: Independent comic artist and former *Monster!* cover illustrator. Lyndal is no stranger to the bold and the bizarre. Look for his work in *Revolutionary's Rock and Roll Comics* series as well as his own *Dr. Bang and his Big Guns* published by Rip Off Press.

**COLIN GEDDES**: Editor of the astounding new *Asian Eye* and another inhabitant of Toronto, the most pleasant city on Earth, this likeable lad's virgin *Monster!* toray was warmly welcomed by one and all. Take a bow, Mr. G.

**HORÁCIO HIGUCHI**: Horácio writes 'windy reviews', says Craig Ledbetter. He has no shame and keeps on doing it.

**TONY LEE**: "The Tiger" appears courtesy of *Strange Adventures* and the United Kingdom.

**LORNE MARSHALL**: *Monster!* sophomore and proven film scholar (look for his byline gracing Redemption Video's **LISA AND THE DEVIL** cassette). The mighty talents of Mr. Marshall have appeared in many magazines including *Videooze* and *Midnight Marquee*.

**EDWARD L. MITCHELL**: Contributed beyond the call of duty and was instrumental in the formation of this very issue. Thanks a million, Uncle Eddie!

**MICHAEL MONAHAN**: Punk rocking film historian.

**MAX DELLA MORA**: Toho authority and Italian-based correspondent for a plethora of high-profile film publications.

**CAMERON SCHOLLES**: Proud papa to Canada's *She* magazine and **DARNA** contributor.

**ERIK SULEV**: Recently married (sorry, gals!) White Dragon Video Founder and all round good egg, this charming Canadian writes regularly for *ATC*, *ETC*, *Highball*, and Tim Lucas' Video Watchdog.

**TIMOTHY PAXTON**: Roky Erickson impersonator and *Monster! International* editor, Tim Paxton caught creature feature fever at an early age and, fortunately for us, never looked back. His unhealthy obsessions include a peculiar fascination for the routinely unwatchable space operas of Al Bradley and writing seemingly endless essays on his sexual devotion to Paul Blaisdell's **SHE CREATURE**. Mothers lock up your daughters!

**DAVID TODARELLO**: *Highball* publisher and Kronos big shot, this Prozac-chomping 5' 6" 140 lb beelcake has left behind a trail of enemies in his unshakable bid for world domination.

**ALEX WALD**: Former art director for First Comics, contributor to Harvey Pekar's latest *American Splendor*, Dark Horse's *Urban Legends*, and avid Nipponese Monster enthusiast, Alex's beautiful rendition of Starman graces the *Monster! International* centerfold!

A MONSTER! INTERNATIONAL DOSSIER

# JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS



## THE MADNESS IN HIS METHOD

BY HORÁCIO HIGUCHI

This series of articles is based mainly on two long interviews this author had with Brazilian film director José Mojica Marins. The first conversation was conducted on August 31, 1973 for the French magazine *L'Ecran Fantastique*, which subsequently invited the filmmaker for the Iti Convention of Fantastic Cinema in Paris. Almost twenty years(!) later, Mr. Marins was gracious to give an oral update for *Monster! International* that extended for three hours. Sources for additional information include: unpublished portions of the first interview; articles in Brazilian, French and Spanish magazines and newspapers; meetings with former actress and Marins's protégée Regina Andrión; and numerous recent phone conversations with the filmmaker. What follows is the first in-depth article in English covering the various aspects of the career of this significant multimedia horror artist.

**J**osé Mojica Marins (approximately pronounced zhoZEH moZHika maRINES) is a man who thrives in horror as a means of expression. For the past thirty years he has plowed that field and yielded movies, TV shows, plays, stage performances, radio shows, comic books, *folionovelas* (comic strips with film frames or staged photos instead of artwork), videos and even a dial-a-story phone service. He is inextricably identified with his most famous character, sadistic undertaker/supernatural spook Zé do Caixão (pronounced ZEH-dough kySHAWN)—a creature who has become part of modern Brazilian folklore as a boogeyman in bedtime stories. Today, Marins is more popular than ever, even among small children. This stocky, balding man with a bushy beard, arched eyebrows joined over the nose bridge and trademark long fingernails, who created some of the most harrowing images in Latin American cinema, is in fact a disarmingly affable person, ever smiling and eager to chat about his projects, opinions and thoughts. Self-educated, he speaks an ungrammatical Portuguese that often becomes garbled and unclear; he polishes it up and pauses in search of the right word when the conversation is being recorded. (A word of caution: some of his notions are controversial and may offend the more sensitive—or sensible—readers.)

1. Except for title translations, all portions in the text contained between double quotation marks (") are Marins's own words to this author. All translations are contextual rather than literal. Throughout the text, only the release titles of completed feature-length films are in **boldface**.





**J**osé Mojica Marins was born in São Paulo, Brazil, on March 13, 1929. His name was, ironically, a tribute from his Spanish-born parents to famous singer and film star José Mojica—a deeply religious man who eventually abandoned his artistic career to become a priest. His father Antonio worked in a travelling circus as a bullfighter. “I believe there is a hereditary vocation for showmanship in our family,” says Marins. “I first thought of becoming a bullfighter like Dad. I saw him fighting and killing those bulls, and his rapport with the audience made me realize the importance of having a public to communicate with.” Bullfighting has never been much of a tradition in Brazil; nevertheless, a few Spanish-born immigrants like the senior Marins tried to introduce this kind of spectacle in small towns. “Dad tried to organize some regular bull runs, but his plans were scrapped when the local SPCA intervened. So he ended up becoming the manager of a neighborhood movie theater, instead.” It was there, at his father’s Cine Santo Estevão, that the young Marins discovered the movies—particularly the scary ones. “I loved the classics—**THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** with Lon Chaney, the **DRACULAS** and **FRANKENSTEINS** with Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff... They were all banned for kids (until quite recently, horror movies were generally restricted to an over-18 audience), but I could watch ‘em from the projection booth. They didn’t scare me, but surely fascinated me. I wondered how did they make ‘em, and I wanted to make similar or even better, scarier movies myself.” At the age of nine or ten he was sent

to join a Catholic lay order school, and set himself to help put together a couple of short stage plays for the parish. “It didn’t quite work out because I wanted to make something a little more interesting than your regular Mother Goose kiddie stories, something a little more striking—nothing really sadistic or the like, just something to jolt the audience a little bit. The priests said I was stepping out of line, and I became restless.” He left the school in mid-term, never to return to an educational institution.

To his surprise, his father gave him an 8mm movie camera. “I started making my own trick shots with the neighborhood kids, though at time I didn’t know what kind of movie I really wanted to make.” Those movies were plotless, “just scenes experimenting with trick photography, like for instance a shot of a giant hand that grabs a kid.” At the age of twelve he got hold of a 16mm camera and, with a group of friends, he shot “17 movies in three years” (see annotated filmography). Those films, running “anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour or so,” were major undertakings for the young Marins: they all had plots and characters, and were actually shown in small stages and under circus tents in the countryside. He and his teenage actors would “go from town to town, carrying cans of film,” and, since the movies were silent, they would “read the lines and explain what’s happening through the PA system while the show went on.” The little money they made with each flick was invested in their next project. “I made all kinds of movies—fantasy, mystery, comedy, melodrama...”

Marins traces back his fascination for things supernatural to two childhood incidents. The first of those preceded his filmmaking activities. “In the neighborhood where we lived there was a man who sold potatoes and used to tell stories to us kids. We all loved him. One day the man died and I went to the funeral with my friends—a black kid, a Portuguese boy and a Japanese [Brazilian] kid. During the wake, he suddenly started to jerk inside his coffin and everybody fled in horror. My friends and I were the only ones who stayed, and we were chatting with the man who had just come back to life. Later we were told that he didn’t die, it was a case of catalepsy. I was shocked by many things: how unfair God was in taking such a good man away, then how the family who loved him so much ran away when he rose from his coffin, and how the priest started to exorcise the casket shouting ‘Back off, Satan!’<sup>2</sup> like a maniac. After that, the potato dealer tried to go on with his business, but nobody trusted him any more and he lost all his customers. Even his wife left him, after all that weeping she did at his wake.” The man writhing in his coffin and the hypocrisy of the people around him caused a deep impact on the impressionable kid.

The other career-defining occurrence happened just after he made his seventh 16mm movie. “I went out with a friend who had a bike, and it was already quite late when we rode by the Lapa Cemetery, which, at that time, had no walls. The bike suddenly stopped, and while my friend was trying to fix it I glanced over the graveyard and suddenly saw a bunch of ghosts coming out of their tombs! We both ran away like mad, desperately pushing the dead bike. That sight really scared me, more than all the horror movies I’d seen. For a long time, every evening I went out with my girlfriend I was afraid of going home alone after dark and made up all kinds of excuses to stay over at her folks’ place. One day I decided I had to do something to overcome my fear. Then I shot a movie I called *Feitiçaria* [“Sorcery”], showing all kinds of Macumba rites, trying to get used to the supernatural and not to be afraid of it. But it was useless, I was still scared. So I mustered up all my courage and went alone to the Conceição Cemetery [the largest necropolis in São Paulo] and waited for midnight, praying. And one of those ‘ghosts’ appeared again! I closed my eyes and it was gone. Then another one appeared, and then vanished! Later I asked many people what those things could possibly have been, and finally a professor showed me the answer in a book on strange yet natural occurrences. What I saw was a will-o’-the-wisp, a common [phenomenon] in graveyards.” Today, the will-o’-the-wisp incident continues to haunt Marins: according to actress and protégée Regina Andrión, part of the current screen tests the filmmaker inflicts on prospective actors for his cast comprises a night trip to the local cemetery to witness that phenomenon.

**M**arins’ first professional feature film project was *SENTENÇA DE DEUS* [“God’s Sentence”], a melodrama “based on the true and tragic events that happened to real people, then long dead.” The title itself proved to be ironic and prophetic. “It was a jinxed movie in the true sense of the word<sup>3</sup>. I was still a practicing Catholic at the time, and some priests told me that the project was cursed and I should give up. I didn’t listen and went ahead with the shooting. One of the main actresses, who had already shot many scenes, showed up dead in her swimming pool. Her replacement started feeling ill and her family asked me to halt the production, and I agreed; two months later, she died of tuberculosis. The third actress to try for that same role was a physically strong Cuban woman who assured me she wasn’t superstitious; but a little later she had an accident and lost both her legs. At that time television was just beginning to expand and I thought, since the shooting was interrupted, I could adapt the screenplay for a TV series of continuing episodes.

2. Or *Vade retro Satana*, a Latin expression commonly (if wrongly) invoked to express disgust or loathing. The King James version gives it as “Get thee behind me, Satan”; a more accurate translation of the original *Vade retro me, Satana*.

3. “Jinxed” — The word *maudito* in Portuguese, in addition to its regular meaning of accursed, jinxed or doomed, shares the usage of the French *maudit* to designate “difficult” artworks that are usually appreciated by only a handful of cultists.



When I finally struck a deal with a local station, our new producer dropped dead!" Despite everything, the project didn't die entirely: Marins had author Aldenora de Sá Porto rewrite the script as a novel, which the unsinkable filmmaker himself ended up peddling to passersby on the Viaduto do Chã [a very busy pedestrian bridge in downtown São Paulo] while showing them fragments of the unfinished movie in a portable moviola and collecting donations 'to benefit the Brazilian film industry.'

His second venture didn't fare better. In 1954 he started working on a script called, prophetically, *O AUGO DO DESESPERO* ["The Pits of Despair"], about a group of mountain climbers who recall their respective lives while undertaking a perilous descent. "We went to Mairiporã [a small town about 30 miles from São Paulo] and spent a month dressing up a set in the open with fake rocks. A terrible storm swept away the place and wrecked everything—sets, equipment... It was a close call for ourselves, too." He had to abandon the production right there, completely broke. "I got so desperate, I even went door-to-door to ask for donations."

By 1959 he managed to get backing for an ambitious project that would become his first completed feature, *A SINA DO AVENTUREIRO* ["The Adventurer's Fate"]. This movie also scored a number of other 'firsts': the first western made in Brazil, the first movie in that country ever shot in widescreen format—and also "the first time two naked women appeared in a [Brazilian] movie." (This latter distinction also started the long-running condemnation of his movies by the Catholic Church.) Again he took his crew to shoot it outdoors, this time in São João da Boa Vista, a hundred miles north of São Paulo. It wasn't exactly a smooth ride. "I had to leave my pregnant wife at home to go on location. The folks up there at São João were very backwards. When I shot a scene in which an actress is thrown away from her mount and ends up covered with blood, they thought I was hurting her for real, they called me a monster and wanted to lynch me. I was totally spent and had to stop the shooting for a couple of days, to start it over later. I swore I had to finish this movie at any cost. Many people died during the project. I never saw the baby my wife lost. After we came back to São Paulo I checked the footage we shot and I realized some of them were out of focus. I couldn't afford to go back [on location] for retakes, and I was so determined to finish the movie I left the botched scenes in, what the hell. The movie wasn't anything to write home about, but what mattered was that I managed to finish it. The investors didn't lose money on it." The critics weren't pleased, and he was called 'the murderer of Brazilian cinema.' Church leaders were furious: this flick not only contained nudity, it also had scenes of unbridled violence and cruelty. "At the time I was still a good Catholic, so I made another movie afterwards [in 1959] where the good guys were priests. That was *MEU DESTINO EM TUAS MÃOS* ["My Destiny in Your Hands"], which was supported by a church organization before they dumped me." The film was an "inspirational tearjerker" he shot "strictly for the money"—he denies any intention of burying the hatchet with the Church—showing the efforts of some dedicated religious leaders to educate a bunch of misguided preteens. It introduced child singer-actor Franquito as 'the Brazilian answer to Pablito Calvo' [the young star of Mexican Ladislao Vajda's 1954 religious melodrama

*MARCELINO PAN Y VINO*/MARCELINO, a huge hit in all South America], but made no waves. Marins was called a 'pervert' by the press.

In the early '60s he tried a hand in the *fotonovela* business, but the most successful among those staged-photo strips were local editions of Italian originals that boasted much better production values than Marins could hope to offer. Marins's *fotonovela* magazine, *A Voz do Cinema* ["Cinema Voice"], ran four issues and folded; he lost a fortune in that enterprise and had to sell everything he had and move in with his wife's family. Still ill-defined about the right course for his career, he started developing two feature film projects. He had some vague ideas on São Paulo juvenile delinquents, then a popular subject in weekly magazines and scandal sheets. Hewrote a script called *INFERNO CARNAL* ["Hell of the Flesh"—not to be confused with the 1976 movie of the same title] about "JDs and rock'n'roll", but couldn't find a producer for it. "Besides, I was no expert on the matter [of rock'n'roll], so I gave it up." His other JD story, *GERAÇÃO MALDITA* ["The Doomed Generation"], put the accent on crime and melodrama and got enough support for a shooting start. But Marins fell ill and the production was halted. It was then he had a nightmare that acted upon him like a religious revelation—it changed his life.

"I had a horrible dream and was delirious. It was like being possessed by the devil. I saw a strange man in black dragging me to a cliff, or to some other place I didn't want to go. I yelled, but the man in black dragged me to a graveyard, to a tombstone with my name and the date of my death. Then I saw the man was myself—me, dragging myself to my own grave! I didn't want to see the date of my death. I screamed and screamed for a long time, and my wife's entire family came to check on me. I opened my eyes and kept staring at my wife's family, screaming 'Don't take me away, don't take me away!' They called a doctor, then even a *pai-de-santo* [a Macumba priest], to no avail. Then I woke up in the morning, took a shower and, without saying a word to the others, went to my office and announced to my producers that I had a new idea for a movie instead of *GERAÇÃO*... I came up with a title right on the spot—*A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA* ["At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul Away"]. Sure, I didn't really have a script, but I convinced them I did—after all, the story was pretty much in my mind. Everybody laughed at the idea: 'You're crazy, Mojica, a Brazilian horror movie! That's for the birds! You must be out of your mind!' But I was adamant. I came up with the Zé do Caixão character, but nobody wanted to play the part: [the actors] thought that role would make them damaged goods. So I decided to play Zé myself. I already had a thick beard, thanks to a promise my family had me make when I was sick [a Brazilian Catholic practice of promising small personal 'sacrifices' for divine favors]. My thumbnails were already long and for my other fingers I wore plastic fingernails. [He would later grow enormously long natural fingernails.] Zé values nature, so he lets his beard and fingernails to grow naturally: he doesn't know whether Man needs scissors. I found a black cape

left in a studio, and I borrowed the topper from a friend. I thought a black suit would fit the character fine." The project was deemed too risky by the producer of Marins's earlier features, Augusto Pereira (later known as Augusto de Cervantes), who backed off. To bankroll his brainchild, Marins had to resort to the time-honored system of

## A Cidade ficará em pânico com o primeiro filme de "Autêntico Terror", do novo Cinema Nacional



TOP: A "teaser" promotional flyer for *A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA*, which translates: "The city will be in panic with the first true horror film of the new Brazilian cinema." BOTTOM: The newspaper ad mat for the same film: "Are you brave enough to watch this horror film to the end?" All crude but effective artwork.



Marins as Zé do Caixão from a publicity shot for a TV appearance.

limited partnership (see sidebar), selling shares of the film to individual investors. He gathered a cast of semi-amateurs and an unexperienced (but quite talented) crew in an old synagogue dressed up as a studio—and the shooting went on for two full weeks, never with a definitive script, always at the risk of bankrupting the next-to-zero budget allocated for the production. (The movie was so cheap that, about twenty years later, an article in *Amiga*—a Brazilian *People*-like magazine—marveled that it “was entirely shot using 13 cans of film stock, an awesome feat considering that Bruno Barreto gobbled up 115 cans for his *DONA FLORE SEUS DOIS MARIDOS* / *DONA FLOR AND HER TWO HUSBANDS*.”) True to his vision, Marins didn’t compromise in showing graphic, in-your-face shock scenes: a man’s fingers being chopped off, eyes being gouged out in extreme closeup, a large tarantula crawling over the upper torso and face of a helpless victim (without anything like the obvious glass panel that protected Sean Connery in a similar scene in *DR. NO*), a decomposing corpse’s face being shown with writhing maggots coming out of the rotten skin. “Those maggots were real. I paid neighborhood kids one cruzeiro for each maggot-infested guava fruit they’d bring me. I picked all the maggots, spread ‘em over the [actress’s] face, then covered ‘em with bread dough soaked in milk. So you see the maggots breaking through the bread dough, which, shot in black-and-white, looks pretty convincingly like facial skin” Besides that sort of crude realism, Marins had his character ridicule religious beliefs and practices. This kind of double-whammy assault on the Catholic sensibilities of the audience—graphic violence and blasphemy—was unprecedented in Brazilian movies. As it was par for the course for Marins, the production was plagued with trouble. “It was really a very hard shooting. Two of the crew died, the money was all gone, my producers turned their backs on me. I was forced to sell my

car, my house, everything I owned. In the end, the only thing I had left were two pairs of pants and a suit. Three days to the end of the shooting, the crew tried to sabotage the movie. They were twenty and I simply didn’t have any money left at all. They refused to work, and then, on the final day, I lost my cool—I picked up a handgun I had for a prop and threatened to kill anyone who didn’t go back to work. I also yelled, ‘I’ve got to finish this movie today even if I have to shoot my own mother and throw her into that grave up there!’ I finished the movie alright, but I ended up owing 8 million cruzeiros to various people, a fortune at the time.”

The rest is history. The first true horror movie made in Brazil was finally ready for release—as soon as it passed the censors. In Brazil there is a federal government agency in charge of censorship, the Department of Public Entertainment, which determines whether a movie can be released in its entirety, or with some cuts, or should be banned altogether; it also gives official ratings. (Every film has to get a certificate of approval from the Department in order to get shown, and there is no such thing as an ‘unrated’ movie.) In those days, before the military coup of 1964, the Department had regional offices with statewide authority, so the release of *À MEIA-NOITE...* was approved by the São Paulo office but rejected by other regional chapters. Then came the coup, the Department was centralized and the movie was withheld for about a year. On top of that, no major distributor was interested even in previewing it—and the penniless and desperate filmmaker finally lured a minor exhibitor to watch it at a private screening in a small neighborhood theater. Marins savors the memory of that occasion with pride: “When the lights came on, the man—who had kept mum throughout the show—looked at me and said one word: ‘Terrific.’” The movie opened in a major São Paulo theater and was a resounding hit. People were aghast at the incredible violence and gore of this domestic production (Herschell Gordon Lewis’s films were never exported to Brazil), and the antireligious rantings of its ‘hero’ surely disturbed many. (In the early ‘70s, a request to renew the certificate of exhibition approval—which expires after five years from its original issue—was denied, in part because of anti-Catholic blasphemy.) The critics at first ignored the film, and later attacked its ‘vulgar sensationalism’ and ‘crude imagery’. But support came from a source Marins never expected: the intellectual elite, who compared him to Luis Buñuel and, through the mouth of Gláuber Rocha, head honcho of the *Cinema Novo* movement [the New Wave of Brazilian Cinema in the ‘60s], proclaimed him ‘the greatest moviemaker in the whole world.’

*À MEIA-NOITE...* thus started the pattern of appreciation of Marins’s movies for the years to come: immense popularity among under-educated, blue-collar audiences; disregard or contempt from mainstream, bourgeois film critics; enthronement and hyperbole from the intellectual ‘class.’ The movie was highly profitable to the distributor, but Marins claims there was not enough left for him to pay off his debts. The story of *Zé do Caixão* was far from over, however: Marins’s original concept “wouldn’t fit in one movie, it needs a series of six episodes” (see the ‘planned and unfinished projects’ section in the filmography). Before tackling the second of such episodes, Marins finished a project begun by director Ody Fraga—*O DIABO DE VILA VELHA* [‘The Devil of Vila Velha’], a western-like rural adventure in color. Good box-office returns allowed him to finally cover the debts left by his previous film.

At last Marins found his true vocation in the horror genre. “Horror is something nobody ever managed, or will manage to overcome. We’re all afraid of the unknown, and everybody fears death because no one knows what it brings to us.” The impressive box-office returns of *À MEIA-NOITE...* convinced producer Augusto Pereira to retract his previous doubts and finance its immediate sequel, *ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER* [‘Tonight I’ll Be Incarnated in Your Corpse’]. This time the more generous budget allowed *Zé do Caixão* to pile up his atrocities: so, instead of the single tarantula of the previous film, now dozens of those furry creepies—not to mention an impressive array of snakes of all sizes—were deployed, and shown in loving detail crawling over the squirming bodies of women in negligees. Predictably, this kind of scene caused much tension during production. “When I started shooting, my actresses had assured me they saw no problem in working with snakes and spiders. (You know how women are, they’ll do anything to show off, they’re the Devil incarnate!) But they all balked when they saw three hundred [sic] tarantulas I brought to the studio! Nobody wanted to go on with the scene and I had to replace the cast. But before hiring new actresses, I had to test the candidates and made them handle and pet a bunch of toads, snakes and spiders... We couldn’t afford rubber or wind-up substitutes, so we had to use the real thing.” The same devil-may-care attitude to achieve maximum results at the expense of his actors’ comfort and well-being pervaded the shooting. This is how he describes how he directed an inexperienced actress in a scene where her character gives birth: “This girl, Nádia Tell, was supposed to pretend she was going through labor pains. She couldn’t half imagine how intense such pains should be, so I decided to use a pair of pliers [off-frame] to squeeze and twist her big toe while shooting the scene.”

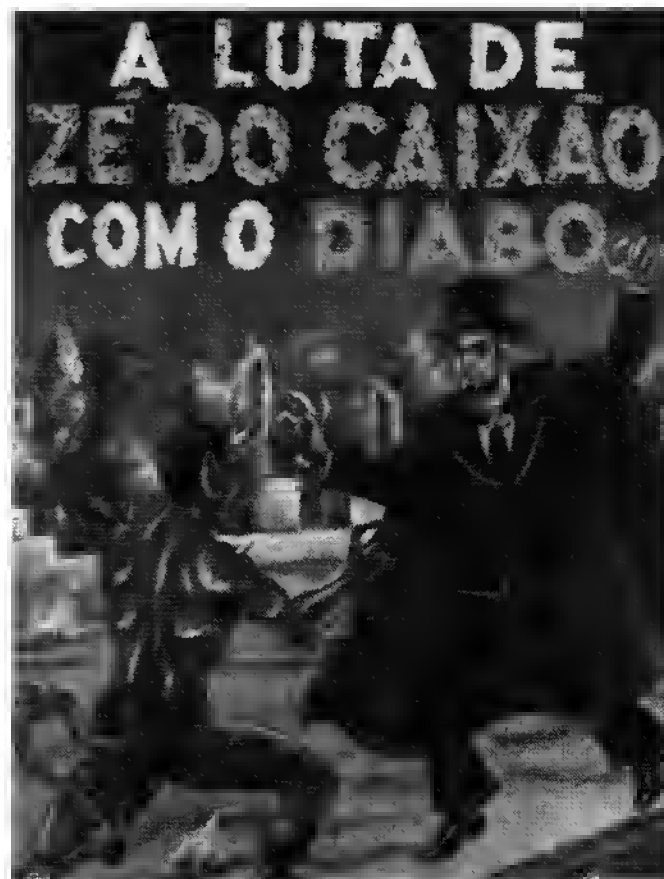
4. Since then the Brazilian currency has changed five times, at each time being devaluated by a thousandfold.

The standout sequence of the movie was the nightmare scene, where Zé was dragged by a bizarre creature (played by an impossibly thin actor nicknamed Palito, or 'stick') down to Hell: the film then turned into color and showed a frozen cave filled with the souls of the damned, naked and partially embedded in the walls, at the mercy of sadistic horned and tailed demons. This was a sight not seen there in any horror movie of the time (Nobuo Nakagawa's masterful *JIGOKU/SINNERS IN HELL* (1960) was never released in Brazil) and was much talked about: the ad tagline in the posters was, in fact, 'See Hell in Eastmancolor!' The Hell set was also built in the synagogue, as was the graveyard where the sequence starts. At the end of *ESTA NOITE*... Zé do Caixão apparently drowns in a bog, but Marins had his resurrection in mind for the series to come. He claims, however, that the ending was compromised because of pressure from the clergy, who "imposed a closing scene where Zé shouts he believes in God." Upon release, the movie was a huge hit and caught the attention of a number of reviewers, some of whom praised its 'surrealistic' qualities while others again decried its extreme, anything-goes luridness. "When they said my movie was surrealistic, I was too embarrassed to admit I didn't know what the word meant." This kind of candor also came out in one occasion when someone compared his Hell sequence with the imagery in Dante's *Inferno*, to which Marins innocently answered he would like very much "to meet this guy Dante." Gláuber Rocha again poured in no faint praise, calling the movie 'the work of a genius,' and other leading directors of 'alternative' films followed suit.

But as Marins's cult status among the intelligentsia went up, prospective producers were scared by his unorthodox (to say the least) methods and possible censorial backlash. His third Zé do Caixão story, then entitled *A ENCARNAÇÃO DO DEMÔNIO* ["The Devil Incarnate"], was too ambitious for the budget he could get and Marins thought of making two interim horror flicks to collect funds for that pet project. (Unfortunately, that dream movie still remains to be made.) Those 'interim' movies were made in 1968 as short-story anthologies. He directed only the first episode of *TRILOGIA DE TERROR* ["Trilogy of Terror"], named *Pesadelo Macabro* ["Macabre Nightmare"]; the other chapters were helmed by two illustrious São Paulo-based filmmakers, Ozualdo Candeias and Luis Sérgio Person. Candeias had got critical acclaim for his allegorical fantasy *A MARGEM* ["The Riverbank," 1967], and Person then had two of the best Brazilian films ever under his belt—the sociopolitical dramas *SÃO PAULO S.A.* ["São Paulo, Inc.," 1965] and *CASO DOS IRMÃOS NAVES* ["The Naves Brothers Affair," 1967]. Both directors became good friends with Marins and appeared as actors in some of his movies. (Candeias is still active, "still making those complicated movies that only he understands"; Person died in 1976 in a car crash.) The three episodes reflect quite well each director's personality and style, and Marins's is the only one that had any popular appeal: centering on taphophobia, it is clearly the best in 'horror' terms, and in a recent TV edition of the movie it was shifted forward as the closing story. The other anthology was all his, and its title, *O ESTRANHO MUNDO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO* ["The Strange World of Zé do Caixão"], became a household name for a number of projects. The title character appeared only as a kind of otherworldly storyteller introducing the stories that followed, but Marins played a sort of brainy twin of his called 'Professor Oaxiac Odez' [sic!] in the last (and best) episode. With this movie Marins started his long association with screenwriter Rubens Francisco Lucchetti, an arch-prolific pulp author who had been putting out hundreds of crime and horror novels in paperback since the '50s, under all kinds of Anglicized pen names. *O ESTRANHO MUNDO*... sold a lot of tickets but didn't do much to appease the censors or win over the local counterparts of Bosley Crowther or Vincent Canby—what with three stories about decapitation, necrophilia, sadism and cannibalism.

**I**n 1968, for the first time, Marins was invited to play a part in a movie directed by someone else. It was in a *cangaceiro* adventure, a Brazilian kind of shoot'em-up involving rural bandits who terrorized the northeast of the country from the turn of the century to the '30s. The life and activities of *cangaceiros* have been mythologized, and in movies they are often portrayed as Robin Hood-like romantic characters fighting ruthless landowners to help the poor. The key title of the genre is Lima Barreto's *O CANGACEIRO/THE BANDITS* (1953), which won prizes for the Best Adventure Film and Best Soundtrack at the 1954 Cannes Film Festival.<sup>5</sup> Marins's character in director Osvaldo de Oliveira's *O CANGACEIRO SEM DEUS* ["The Godless Cangaceiro"] was well-suited to his public image: a charismatic religious leader (loosely based on the real-life revolutionary messiah Antônio Conselheiro) who leads his people to revolt against the newly-formed Republic. That role was followed by another bizarre character, a dedicated fakir in a run-down circus in *O PROFETA DA FOME* ["Prophet of Hunger"]. This film, directed by university professor and essayist Maurice Capovilla, was an extraordinary portrait of life on the edge and popular mysticism. Marins's powerful performance as the title character—a thinly-disguised portrait of Silki, a notorious fakir who let himself be buried alive

in the heart of downtown São Paulo—got him the accolades usually denied by the critics for his own projects. Besides those acting jobs, with his popularity at a peak, Marins started to expand the so-called Strange World of Zé do Caixão into other media. He launched a magazine with that very name—a 68-page, large-format publication containing a horror comic strip and a *fotonovela* with scenes of gore and nudity: the latter was often made of frame blowups from the movie of the same title. He wrote and directed dozens of horror stories for a weekly 30-minute TV show called *Além, Muito Além do Além* ["Beyond, Way Beyond the Beyond"]. (Years later, he



The cover of a "cordel" featuring a poem about Zé confronting the Devil.

would produce another similar show for a different network, under the predictable title *O Estranho Mundo de Zé do Caixão*.) He even made a couple of humorous Carnival songs about Zé that were released in a single in 1969. A whole line of Zé do Caixão products was also unleashed at that time: skin lotions, nail polishes, perfumes, Macumba incense to ward off evil spirits(!), costumes, car-window figurines, beverages, etc. The most outrageous of those schemes was probably the 'Zé do Caixão Funeral Service Plan,' whereby clients would pay cheap monthly installments to get a decent burial upon their death! Other *fotonovela* magazines with Zé as a Crypt Keeper-like host appeared in the following decade.

In the public mind, Marins became indistinguishable from Zé do Caixão, a fact that the filmmaker exploited to great advantage: travelling around the country, he was often thought to have genuine supernatural powers and enjoyed the spotlight. If critics and social commentators were uncertain about how to tackle the Zé do Caixão phenomenon, the masses spoke loud and clear. Perhaps nothing could better express the popularity of the character as the fact that he was written about in *cordel* sagas. *Cordel* is a modality of folk literature, a sort of an epic poem of a few dozen stanzas telling stories of high passion, adventure or revenge, seasoned with melodrama or comedy, to be recited to music before an audience. The form originated in the

5. The *cangaceiro* genre was practically swamped by the invasion of Italian westerns in the mid-'60s: remarkably, there was even an Italian contribution to the genre, also entitled, simply, *O CANGACEIRO* (1970, directed by Giovanni Fago). A note of some interest: in *VideOoze* #2 contributor Walt O'Hara reviews Jesús Franco's *DER TODESKUB DES DR. FU MAN CHU/KISS AND KILL* (1968) and mentions actor Ricardo Palacios as wearing "the silliest hat on celluloid". The lobby card on page 14 shows the offending headgear—an authentic *cangaceiro* hat!

Brazilian north and northeast, written by self-educated local poets, issued in pulp editions with a piece of string tying its pages (hence the name *cordel*, twine) and sold for a pittance. (Now this kind of folk literature has spread to the whole country, and, for better or worse, even achieved respectability in college circles.) To have *cordel* authors making one character in their epics is to be immortalized in popular memory, akin to having one's name included in the lyrics of a hit song. And Zé do Caixão achieved this immortality.

The confusion between author and character was reinforced further when stories about Marins's 'dangerous screen tests' came out in the popular press, as further proof that Marins-the-Filmmaker was at least as sadistic and reprehensible as the monstrous Zé. Of course, all that spotlight gave him some good free publicity. The replacement of the female cast of *ESTA NOITE...* with people brave enough to handle tarantulas and snakes had been a big headache for the filmmaker. "I was sick and tired of [those women] trying to fool me, promising they'd do anything at all I told them to—eat worms, hit the sack with a corpse, you name it. But seeing is believing, so I decided to thoroughly test those who want to be in my movies." From then on, his auditions would become physical ordeals to test the capacity of aspiring actors (and especially actresses) to withstand situations most people would consider unsavory or repellent. "If the script said a character had to have a spider crawling over her face, I wanted to see the actress doing exactly that [in her audition], before I started shooting at all." Those trials were highly publicized and did nothing but to enhance the public perception that Marins was a maniac and a pervert. The following half-mocking eyewitness account of one such audition is from an article by Nemércio Nogueira for a now-defunct monthly magazine:

Eight A.M.: a small crowd waits for him at his studio in Freguesia do Ó, a São Paulo neighborhood. Housemaids, office boys, unemployed folks: they all came to for a film audition. Reporters and photographers are ready. Without smiling, looking forward, Marins starts his selection process. He calls aside a young woman, a dark-haired beauty with the looks of a Native Brazilian: she wears a bikini swimsuit.

'Lie down there,' he orders, dryly. 'Don't ask any questions.' He points at a coffin on the floor. The girl obeys, hesitating and thoughtful. Photographers click their cameras amid dead silence: this is the first time they witness Marins's famous auditions—in fact, he could use some publicity. Awkwardly, tucking in her belly, the girl manages to lie down in the coffin. A man gets close to her. He is a doctor; he is there for anybody who gets injured or freaks out.

'You there,' points the moviemaker. 'Come here, take the baby out.' The young man with greasy hair and a forced smile puts his hand inside a shoebox. His expression changes to a mixture of disgust and horror. A whisper sweeps the room. Marins orders: 'Put the baby on her. Next to her neck.' His arm hardened, his muscles tense, the young man obeys: he places the tarantula on the girl's sweat-drenched body. The young woman stays still, hardly breathing. She knows the spider already had its venom taken out. But the nauseating sensation caused by its spiny legs is reflected in her face. Minutes pass. The spider crawls up her neck, then down to the coffin. It pauses and creeps up the woman's arm. The spider's stroll takes about five minutes. 'Take her outta there!' Relief in the audience. Pale but triumphant, the girl exits to the changing room.

'Are you scared to put on a bikini?' Marins asks another woman. A sullen smile is her answer. 'Come here.' She gets closer. Another man is called upon. 'Grab those cuties there—with both hands.' A secretary brings another shoebox. The man takes a pair of toads out of it. He doesn't look disgusted, he even appears to be enjoying it. Anything to be a movie star.

'Throw 'em on her neckline.' The woman backs off and screams. The man isn't impressed. Helpless, she feels the slimy cold of the toads. She won't pass the test.

When Marins orders his aspiring actors to eat worms in grenadine, to let rats and snakes crawl over their bodies, almost everybody obeys. Out of fear and because they'd do anything to be in the movies. None of them knows, however, that when he is with his mother, this authoritarian filmmaker just shuts up. He is respectful and docile. Dona Carmen, very much Catholic and Spanish, keeps her only son under tight control. She wouldn't think twice before disciplining his son in public, if needed. José Mojica Marins the Terrible, getting scolded by his mom...! (*Realidade*, issue #37, April 1969)

The profits of *TRILOGIA...* and *O ESTRANHO MUNDO...* were not enough to fund the sequel to *ESTA NOITE...*, so Marins invested the money in a high-risk, demented and hard-to-pigeonhole film project—*RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS* [*'Ritual of the Maniacs'*]. He had been viciously attacked by a 'trial jury' in the idiotic tabloid-TV show *Quem Tem Medo da Verdade?* [*'Who's Afraid of the Truth?'*], a kind of *Hot Seat* by way of *The Morton Downey Jr. Show* where guest celebrities were interrogated by seven morons with the lofty arrogance of a William F. Buckley Jr. and the intellectual flab of a Rush Limbaugh, and then proclaimed 'guilty' or 'not guilty.' Many of the 'victims' of that show later took revenge on its producer by caricaturing him in songs and on TV; Marins, however, incorporated video footage of his appearance in the program into *RITUAL...*, made a clear distinction between Marins-the-Filmmaker and Zé do Caixão, and surrounded himself with supportive critics and movie directors—Maurice Capovilla, João Callegaro, Carlos Reichenbach, Jairo Ferreira—in a framing sequence that parodies the real show and practically proclaims him a genius. He also gave the main role to a well-respected character actor, Sérgio Hingst, and minor but relevant parts to award-winning stage actress Ítala Nandi and film and TV star Annik Malvil. "[Those celebrities] accepted my directing techniques, which were quite liberal: I just explained them what I wanted and left it up to them. It is easier to work with experienced pros than with novices." The main plotline of the movie involved four drug addicts submitted to an LSD experiment who see in Zé do Caixão a projection of their own personal obsessions. Short episodes illustrating various kinds of 'aberrant' sexual behavior are also shown. Unfortunately, the country was undergoing a period of extreme political repression under the military regime: a record number of books, films and works of art were being interdicted, artists and intellectuals imprisoned and tortured or exiled. The censors were not amused and banned *RITUAL...* outright. "I guess the interdiction [was] due to the movie's theme, what with a bunch of folks taking drugs in search of new highs. It is a very violent movie, a catalog of perversions, about people taking LSD to feel free to do whatever they want. One of the scenes that most troubled [the censors] had a Moses-like character raping a girl with his staff." The movie remained banned for many years, but its hallucination sequences were later recycled in *DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL* (1977); it was finally shown in its entirety in 1986, without further complaints from the censors, under the title *O DESPERTAR DA BESTA* [*'The Awakening of the Beast'*].

While waiting in vain for the official approval of *RITUAL...* for general release, Marins directed a jungle adventure, *SEXO E SANGUE NA TRILHA DO TESOURO* [*'Sex and Blood in the Trail of the Treasure'*], in which he appeared at the end as a mystical character who guards the title treasure. "I felt I couldn't make more horror



The hideous Bruno (Nivaldo de Lima) from José Mojica Marins's second horror film *ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER* (1966)





LEFT: Marins as *Finis Hominis* in **QUANDO OS DEUSES ADORMECERAM** (1972).

LOWER LEFT: Marins seated next to a bored Christopher Lee at the 1974 III International Convention of Fantastic Cinema.

flicks the way I wanted because of the censors' pressure, so I tried other genres. I had no choice: making movies was the only thing I could do." The period 1970-1973 was marked by a series of flops. One was the semi-western **D'GAJÃO MATA PARA SE VINGAR** ["D'gajão Kills for Revenge"], with gypsies replacing cowpokes, and an obvious reference in the title to Italian western hero Django; Marins didn't take part in its cast. There were also two features focusing on a new character: **FINIS HOMINIS—O FIM DO HOMEM** ["Finis Hominis—the End of Man"] and its sequel **QUANDO OS DEUSES ADORMECERAM** ["When the Gods Fall Asleep"]. "They were produced by an American who promised to finance [the third *Zé do Caixão* movie] afterwards. He wanted to show a sort of Antichrist, but after **RITUAL**... was banned we decided to change the spirit of the story. Then the American dropped out of the project." The new character, Finis Hominis, was made instead a benign wacko who repeats Christ's miracles on Earth. "His name is Finis Hominis because he entered a church thirsty and, not finding any water, ended up drinking the priest's

wine. The priest thought that was a blasphemy and screamed 'Finis Hominis!'—or 'That's the End of Man!,' a name that stayed in the mind of the amnesiac madman as being his own." Those two movies lacked everything Marins was famous for—sadism, gore, sexual deviations—and their poor reception signaled the sudden end of the Finis Hominis saga. Another genre Marins tried his hand on was the *pornoanchada* or *comédia erótica*—softcore sex comedies that, in the early '70s, were just about the only kind of domestic movies that made any profit.<sup>6</sup> At that time the censors were more tolerant of light sex fare than of gore, political activism or depictions of drug use. But Marins's name was too well-known: his *fotonovela* magazines were banned and he was an obvious target of the Department of Public Entertainment—so he decided to sign a couple of *pornoanchadas* under the pseudonym, 'J. Avelar.' One of them, the western-cum-sex comedy **O FRACASSO DE UM HOMEM EM DUAS NOITES DE NÚPCIAS** ["The Failure of a Man in Two Wedding Nights"] was a curious experiment with no dialog and barely had a release, disappearing quickly into oblivion. The other erotic farce, **A VIRGEM E O MACHÃO** ["The Virgin and the Stud"], was more commercially successful: in fact, "it was a surprise hit." The continuing censorial pressure made producers wary of horror films, and they would rather back a surefire *pornoanchada* than support Marins's pet project.

In 1974 Marins started adapting many of his previously written comic strip and TV show stories for stage performances. The same year, following the interview for *L'Écran Fantastique*, he was invited to Paris to take part in the III International Convention of Fantastic Cinema, sponsored by that publication. He took along prints of **ESTA NOITE**... and **O ESTRANHO MUNDO**... and received the 'Prix Tiers Monde' from the festival jury. There he met some international celebrities associated with fantasy films, including actor Christopher Lee. They all appeared in a news conference before the notoriously raucous fans that attended the Grand Rex theater. "Lee didn't fare well with the fans. He told all horror buffs there that he was giving up the genre, that he made horror flicks only for money. The fans didn't like that. Then came my turn to face the public. I had a guy serving as a translator who explained them how I made my movies. The audience was mum throughout the conference and clapped when it was over. For once the fans didn't throw Coke bottles on the stage [as they often did]. I was acclaimed and carried away by them. In Paris he also found time to climb up to the roof of the cathedral of Notre Dame and pose with its celebrated



6. The key title in this cycle is Pedro Carlos Rovai's **A VIÚVA VIRGEM** ["The Virgin Widow", 1972]. In spite of its moniker, this genre should not be confused with hardcore pornography—which became tolerated (and popular) only a decade later.



Those distinctive fingernails belong to Marins himself, warding off a possessed Jofre Soares (**EXORCISMO NEGRO**, 1974).

gargoyles. And shot a couple of *fotonovelas* on the spot, "one of supernatural horror, the other with gore and violence." He was approached by the daughter of one of the proprietors of the city's prime newspaper *Le Figaro*, and invited to a party in her mansion. "She insisted on taking part in one of our *fotonovelas*. The shooting took four days, and they were never published in Brazil. A Paris-based Brazilian journalist issued them in French and sold them to other European countries."

Upon his return and sudden international fame, he was courted by the local media and propositioned by producer Aníbal Massaini Neto—whose family owns an extensive chain of theaters in São Paulo. Massaini wanted to get into the exorcism-flick bandwagon, then just lurking around on the horizon with the impending local release of William Friedkin's genre watershed. He wanted a 'classy' crowd pleaser and offered Marins a generous budget, coupled with the services of some well-known screen and television stars and a more professional crew. An old script was hastily revised and then further modified by actor Adriano Stuart, who also took for himself a pivotal role. A long nightmare sequence that obviously took place in the 'Strange World of Zé do Caixão' (to keep to the cliché) was included, probably to make good use of a trunkful of rubber arms, disembodied hands and other assorted novelty-shop goodies that Marins brought from Europe. The movie, first called *OTIRADOR DE DEMÔNIOS* ["The Demon-taker"], was released as **EXORCISMO NEGRO** ["Black Exorcism"]. The combination of a maverick director and an outside producer with big bucks, big cast and bigger demands severely compromised the integrity of the film and the results were mediocre; yet it was a box-office hit, and probably seen by more people than any other Zé do Caixão movie, thanks to good distribution through Massaini's theater chain, slick publicity and full use of color for the first time in a Brazilian horror feature. Some of the star performers allegedly enjoyed the experience of working with Marins. "They thought I

directed in a way to make the actors truly experience the scenes they were in. For instance, at a certain point in the story [actress] Geórgia Gomide was supposed to faint, and she got so much into the act that she actually passed out! She thought that was fantastic." He made Wanda Kosmo, a respected stage actress, actually bite a live chicken to death as her character required. "She didn't complain, and even came back later to work in another film of mine [the unfinished *A PRACA*]. The cast and I became friends and even today they tell me they'd like to work with me again." Marins regrets not owning residues from the profits of **EXORCISMO NEGRO**: he sold his share of the movie to Massaini, who got all the revenues from domestic and international sales. "When there was a chance of exporting the movie, I couldn't get my own cut. I always fall into that trap, I sell my share and later I bite the dust."

A string of quickies with recycled ideas and footage made up the second half of the '70s. In 1975 Marins opened his own production company, *Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão*. Its first offering was *A ESTRANHA HOSPEDARIA DOS PRAZERES* ["The Strange Inn of Pleasures"], a toothless combination of sex and fantasy. Eschewing the production values of his previous feature, Marins went back to use in-house



talent exclusively. "Marcelo Motta started the movie and abandoned it, and I had to finish it. He was a student of mine and I wanted to give him a chance, so he ended up receiving sole credit as director." Pseudonymous 'J. Avelar' made a comeback the following year with the sex comedy **COMO CONSOLAR VIÚVAS** ["How to Comfort a Widow"], reuniting Marins with producer Augusto Pereira—the man who put up the money for **ESTA NOITE...**, now signing 'Augusto de Cervantes.' "It was a horror comedy of sorts, with dead husbands coming back from the grave to terrorize their wives' new lovers. I even made fun of Father Quevedo [a notorious priest who dabbled with the paranormal] in the character of an exorcist." Next came **INFERNO**

**CARNAL** ["Hell of the Flesh"], a return to straight horror, this time in the vein of those blood-soaked morality/retribution plays that essentially were most of the EC comics output. This non-supernatural story was fittingly adapted from a comic book script Marins wrote many years before. After that, Marins contributed to **AS MULHERES DO SEXO VIOLENTO** ["Women of Violent Sex"], a crime adventure directed in turns by a dozen people. "The only guy who didn't have a hand in the helm, Francisco Cavalcanti, ended up credited as the director. He and I were partners in the production and most of what I shot ended up in the final print. Then we sold it to a distributor who came up with the release title." In 1977 he directed a science fiction sex comedy for actress-producer Rosângela Maldonado called **A MULHER QUE PÔE A POMBA NO AR**, a racy double-entendre title that literally translates as "The Woman Who Makes Doves Fly" but can also be understood as "The Woman Who Keeps Her Pussy Up" (!). In this first collaboration with Marins, producer Maldonado ended up credited as 'artistic director'—not to be confused with art director—in a silly story about flying dove-women. The movie bombed and Marins went on to work on a project that was both personal and cheap, **DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL** ["Hallucinations of a Deranged Person (or Mind)"], definitely not "Abnormal Delirium" as it has been quoted elsewhere. "I made it as personal revolt against the censors, who always cut my movies. I put together bits and pieces of all [sic] my movies in a story about a crazy psychologist [sic—Marins doesn't distinguish between psychologists, psychoanalysts and psychotherapists]. It was the first movie of mine that ended up not touched by the censors. I took it to a film event parallel to the Brasília Film Festival and it was instead shown in the Festival itself. There I spoke against censorship in a press conference and it was endorsed by twenty prestigious celebrities, from a state minister to the late [world-renowned physicist and art critic] Mário Schemberg."

**B**y that time Marins had many fans among underground artists, film buffs and students. One of them, Ivan Cardoso, started hanging out with him and shot a two-part short documentary about the filmmaker and his methods called **O UNIVERSO DE MOJICA MARINS** ["The Universe of Mojica Marins"] which actually played in theaters as a program filler. It was sent to film festivals in Spain and in Italy, and its favorable reception abroad gave Cardoso—who "couldn't even handle a

camera" then—the momentum to fully develop an on-again, off-again horror comedy in 16mm he had began, **O SEGREDO DA MÚMIA** ["Secret of the Mummy"]. "[Cardoso] was all mixed-up, he couldn't decide whether to play it for laughs or for scares. I introduced him to Rubens Francisco Lucchetti, who wrote him a [final] script for it." Marins ended up playing a role in the newly-shot additional sequences of the extended film; the completed feature was blown up to 35mm and finally released in 1982. Cardoso went on to make more genre pastiches like **AS SETE VAMPIRAS** ["The Seven Vampiresses," 1985—see *Monster! International* #1] and **O ESCORPIÃO ESCARLATE** ["The Scarlet Scorpion", 1990].

In 1978, after an acting stint for experimental director Rogério Sganzeria in **O ABISMU, OR SOIS TODOS DE MU** ["The Abyss-Mu, or You're All from Lemuria"], he made a thinly-veiled version of a real-life crime. He persuaded the murder suspect herself, Elza Leonetti do Amaral, to buy a share in the production: that fact alone gave the project good free publicity. It was called **ESTUPRO** ["Rape"] but the censors vetoed the title, so it had to be changed to **PERVERSÃO** ["Perversion"]. Marins took it to the International Festival of Fantastic and Horror Cinema in Sitges, Spain. In this first trip to the country of his ancestors, Marins had a great time, despite the fact he broke his arm in an accident with his ubiquitous coffin. "After my press conference some folks asked me to show them how I worked. Right there, on the spot, with my arm in a plaster cast, I shot some half-hour of footage that I kept to this date." **PERVERSÃO** was released in January 1979, while he was completing his next feature, **MUNDO, MERCADO DO SEXO—MANCHETE DE JORNAL** ["The World, This Sex Market—Newspaper Headline"]. "It was my homage to all journalists. I get along well with the press, at least with part of it. Sixty percent of the press likes my work, the other forty percent doesn't. All those young journalists that graduated recently are on my side." He rounded off the year acting in his second and last collaboration with actress-producer Rosângela Maldonado, **A DEUSA DE MÁRMORE—ESCRAVA DO DIABO** ["The Marble Goddess—the Devil's Slave"]. Maldonado herself decided to helm it and had Marins play Seu Sete da Encruzilhada, a Macumba entity made into the Devil in the movie. Marins's male ego was

somewhat bruised by her script and casting choices: "[Maldonado] was a big disappointment as a director. She wanted me to play a sort of a gay Devil, 'cause in my Hell there were only men. I went ballistic and ordered her to give my character at least one female secretary. She gave me four female secretaries, but all the sinners in Hell were men! What kinda fuckin' Devil is that, a Devil who likes to rule over men only?! The movie was a bomb simply because of that [sic]! Also, the movie really

BRASIL INTERNACIONAL CINEMA '78 - A - PHILLY - NIMATOY PAI - DO CAIXÃO apresentaram

José Mojica Marins

(1976)

**INFERNO CARNAL**



The stunning artwork for Marins's **INFERNO CARNAL** (1976) pressbook was painted by Benicio, Brazil's leading paperback cover illustrator.

7. By law, every film program shown in Brazil has to include at least one domestically-produced component. Newsreels, local documentaries and even blatant infomercial-like shorts are thrown at the hapless viewers before the feature for which they paid admission can run.





Publicity shot for *DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL* (1977).

ended her career, because she was a good actress but she wouldn't act her age, she claimed to be thirty-something while she was in fact pushing 60. Granted, after five or six facelifts she was in good shape and could pass for about 45, but [the role she chose for herself] was of a girl in her late teens! The whole thing was ridiculous, the movie bombed because there were too many men." He claims he had some power over the film crew, who shot the scenes in which he appeared more or less the way he wanted, often against the tyro director's judgment.

A potentially intriguing project that almost came to fruition about that time was *COMBOIO DA MORTE* ["Convoy of Death"], written by a cousin of former President Jânio Quadros. It was set to be a triptych where three versions of same story would be helmed by filmmakers of widely different styles. Besides Marins, the other directors chosen were Gláuber Rocha and Lima Barreto. Rocha, the doyen of the *Cinema Novo* movement, was already a good friend and admired Marins for being 'able to make a movie out of nothing.' Barreto, decidedly more conservative, was the first Brazilian filmmaker to achieve international acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival with the above-mentioned *OCANGACEIRO*. "Gláuber [Rocha] and I immediately accepted the project, but it took me six months to convince Lima Barreto. But then Gláuber died, the producers disappeared suddenly and soon Lima also died. It was a pity this original idea of three filmmakers retelling the same story in different ways was never made."

In 1980 Marins shot *A PRAGA* ["The Curse"], a gruesome horror story previously published in comic strip form and also presented on Marins's TV show. Filmed in 16mm with a decent cast, it hasn't been edited to a final cut yet. He still hopes to finish it and release it "at any moment," as soon as he buys back his partners' shares. If it ever comes to light, it could well be one of his most startling projects, sort of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* by way of David Cronenberg (see synopsis in the 'works in progress' section of the filmography). In the same year he went on the road with his spook-shows. Adapting once again a bunch of previously written stories for one-act stage appearances, he and his crew of actors and technicians toured many small towns and six Brazilian state capitals. In the tradition of the French *Théâtre du Grand Guignol*,

those shows relied on shock effects and gore, with live performances of decapitations and human sacrifices. He also gave 'lecture-shows,' combining his stage performances with a discussion of his techniques, attended by audiences of up to 1200. One of those lecture-shows was filmed by young filmmaker Goffredo da Silva Telles Netto for a short documentary he named *FOGO-FÁTUA* ["Will-o'-the-Wisp"], recalling the famous incident that scared Marins in his formative years.

Around that time Marins was invited by a dishonest producer to give one of his film acting courses in Belo Horizonte, in the mid-south of the country. According to Regina Andrion, then a pre-teen who lived there and attended that course, the said producer took advantage of Marins's fame 'to get as many naive aspiring actors as possible to enroll. Then he collected shares from all students, promising all shareholders a part in a movie that Marins would direct.' The course was pretty serious, with daily classes for four months. As part of it, Marins shot a sketch where the young Andrion played a child to be sacrificed to the Devil. 'I was tied up to a cross and [Marins] stabbed me in the heart with a long knife, and ketchup blood spilled all over.' The scene was to be incorporated in the proposed feature, *UMA VIRGEM PARA SATÂ* ["A Virgin for Satan"], of which a complete script did in fact exist. But the producer disappeared with the shares money and soon it became clear everybody, including Marins, had been had. It was a devastating experience for many starry-eyed locals. 'There were people who sold their property to buy a share, wives who left their husbands for the chance of appearing in a movie... It was obvious that [the producer] never had the intention to make the movie in the first place.'

The following year he resumed his TV work with a weekly dramatization of horror stories called *Um Show do Outro Mundo* ["A Show from Another World"]. "I began to have trouble with the network bosses. Fan letters demanded we showed stories like those in the 60s, but the network wanted something bland and corny. The conflict was getting uglier and uglier and by the end of the year I decided to split and go on with other things." Meanwhile, he shot five shorts to be shown theatrically as program fodder.

**I**n 1982 he tried to pull off the biggest con game of them all: politics! "That was the year of the great disaster. I gave up TV, movies, everything, to run for the House of Representatives. I decided to become a Congressman because I realized there was nobody out there representing our interests, nobody taking care of our culture. I'm strong-willed, I always did whatever I wanted because I wanted to: I made movies because I wanted to, I did TV because I wanted to... I thought if I got elected I'd be able to handle [politics], that I'd be able to fight for all I cared for. My platform was to help my fellow filmmakers and artists and other underdogs. I think garbage collectors and gravediggers are the ultimate underdogs. They deserve good wages because they work very hard in a job everybody finds disgusting. So my platform ran: 'In defense of gravediggers, garbage collectors and filmmakers!' That's all, I couldn't just run on promises of any kind." He joined the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB)—which, despite its title, is actually a hodgepodge of conservatives with a few or several notches to the right—and allied himself with former President Jânio Quadros, then running for mayor of São Paulo. In Brazil, city, state and Congress elections are often held simultaneously, and non-binding but highly visible tickets with candidates for different offices are formed. Usually, one of the candidates in a ticket has a stronger profile or better name recognition, and the others hope to ride on his/her coattails. If Marins courted the former President (a colorful demagogue with his own cult following, now deceased), he in turn was courted by lesser celebrities, anxious to have him in their respective tickets and ride on his coattails. "I went on the campaign trail giving free spook-shows along with my stump speeches all over the state. The little money I saved from my movies and TV shows, I used it all up in the campaign." After the vote, a shocking revelation: everybody in his ticket was elected except him. In a country without voting machines, the electorate is supposed to write down the name of the chosen candidate on the ballot—and the vast majority of Marins's voters wrote 'Zé do Caixão' instead of 'José Mojica Marins'! Despite Marins's protests, all ballots marked 'Zé do Caixão' were declared null and void. So he lost. Were he elected, would he have been a good Congressman? "No, I got thoroughly disgusted, I guess the only profession I'll never try again is politics. I saw all the hypocrisy of politics from close quarters. I guess if I got elected I'd have resigned, because I'd never be allowed to do what I wanted. It was a disappointment and lesson for me."

After that debacle he had to get back on his feet and started working feverishly. He was approached to play the villain in a movie for children, *PADRE PEDRO E A REVOLTA DAS CRIANÇAS* ["Father Pedro and the Children's Rebellion"], directed by Francisco Cavalcanti and featuring Pedro de Lara, a TV celebrity with a curmudgeon persona. "I put on my cape and top hat, although I wasn't playing Zé do Caixão. My character was a mob boss who tries to prevent the Church from interfering in his gambling racket. It was poorly made and promoted, and it bombed. I usually play villains because that's what I do better, the audience wouldn't swallow

if I played a hero." The upshot of that experience was that he started to be better known among children: since his character was dressed up pretty much like Zé do Caixão, it didn't take long for pre-teens to get familiarized with this boogeyman with a sinister beard and claw-like fingernails. Still in 1983, he made "a romantic movie for a gay audience" (!), *A QUINTA DIMENSÃO DO SEXO* ["The Fifth Dimension of Sex"]. It was a sex thriller with a difference: after raping many women, the two leading male characters end up falling for each other. "It was a serious movie praised by the gay community. I signed it with my real name [instead of using 'J. Avelar'], I had nothing to hide."

**I**n 1984, however, Marins dabbled with hardcore pornography. "I was aching to make a horror flick and this guy comes with a proposal. Everybody in the country was making hardcore porn—even some of our best directors, using fake names. People thought if I did violent flicks so well, surely I'd be equally as good handling porn. So the guy wanted me to direct *24 HORAS DE SEXO ARDENTE* [*"24 Hours of Blazing Sex"*]. I took it on one condition: that, if the movie made any money, [its producer] would back my long-awaited follow-up to *ESTA NOITE...*" Marins claims he hired "the ugliest women in the country" to make the ultimate hardcore sex movie, something that would "disgust the audience so much they'd never want to watch a porno flick again." To top it off, he included a scene involving a woman and a dog. The results were so outrageous Marins himself acknowledges he was "unable to have sex for six months" after he made the movie. He expected it to make a quick run and go away, but then "what couldn't have happened ended up happening. It played at the Ritz theater, then totally run-down, with a contract for no more than a week. It played there for *ten weeks!* Then it went to the Marabá theater [an important moviehouse where Steven Spielberg flicks usually have their first run!] and was held over for five more weeks." Then it was sent to the neighborhoods and other states, and played for a full year in different theaters. The movie caught on by word-of-mouth, thanks to the infamous bestiality sequence. "Pictures of the dog appeared on all papers but the censors, who didn't cut the movie at all, banned all photos of the dog." Its popularity gave rise to a string of imitations with scenes of women having sex with all kinds of animals. Eventually, "the whole thing became such a zoo that the trend just exhausted itself." In 1985 Marins played a role in Francisco Cavalcanti's *O FILHO DO SEXO* ["The Son of Sex"], a softcore erotic drama.

Two years after the 'embarrassing' success of *24 HORAS...*, its producer, instead of financing the new Zé do Caixão movie, insisted on a sequel, *48 HORAS DE SEXO ALUCINANTE* [*"48 Hours of Hallucinatory Sex"*], another hardcore porn project. "There was nothing new to show, everything had been done before, and the producer, who thought of himself as a master screenwriter, demanded I stick to his script. It didn't work and the picture was a failure." Júlio Bressane, an underground filmmaker who worships Marins, reportedly loved it nevertheless. Meanwhile, the press started to assail Marins with requests for interviews and the movie got exceptional coverage for its kind. That year of 1986 was one of most active in his life. He finally got a public showing of his long-banned *RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS*, retitled *O DESPERTAR DA BESTA*, at the RioCine Film Festival, where it got prizes for him (Best Actor) and writer Rubens F. Lucchetti (Best Screenplay). This time the censors didn't cut a single scene, but the movie is yet to enjoy a regular release in theaters. Then he was approached by producer-director Francisco Cavalcanti to shoot additional gore footage for a sex thriller that, trimmed of its hardcore porn scenes, was converted into a horror quickie. The resulting feature was released as *A HORA DO MEDO* ["The Hour of Fear"], with Marins credited as 'supervising director.' He also struck a deal with producer Ary Santiago for a hardcore porn flick, *DR FRANKLIN NA CLÍNICA DAS TARAS* ["Dr. Franklin in the Kinky Clinic"] and a slasher thriller, *AS DUAS FACES DE UM PSICOPATA* ["The Two Faces of a Psycho"]—both shot back-to-back in Brasília, the country's capital, for budgetary reasons. During the making of the latter a funny incident almost halted the production. "We were shooting a scene at the tomb of President Juscelino Kubitschek [who founded Brasília in 1960]. The moment my lead actor was sitting on the tomb, Kubitschek's daughter appeared on the spot and was aghast [by the appearance of sacrilege]. I had to make up a story to assure her we were making a tribute to the late, great President." After a porno flick and a gory thriller, Marins went on to supervise a kiddie movie (!), *CHAPÉUZINHO VERMELHO* ["Little Red Ridinghood"], directed by Wilson Rodrigues and written by the ubiquitous Lucchetti. "It's the same old story: [as a supervisor] I gave [Rodrigues] some tips on directing, he didn't follow any of them and the movie turned into a piece of turd." He also found time to act in the crime thriller *HORAS FATAIS* ["Fatal Hours"], directed by Clery Cunha and Francisco Cavalcanti, and later played a crooked preacher in Ozuaido Candéias's *AS BELAS DA BILLINGS* ["Beauties of the Billings Reservoir"—the title refers to homeless women who leave near a large water reservoir that supplies the city of São Paulo]. Zé do Caixão made a punchline-appearance at the end of the short *A ÚLTIMA SESSÃO*

*DE CINEMA* ["The Last Picture Show," director's name unavailable], a story of theater ushers and the movies they watch. Marins's last activity in that busy year was the shooting of his autobiographical *DEMÔNIOS E MARAVILHAS* ["Of Demons and Wonders"], a reflection on his own life that includes part of the footage he shot in Spain some eight years before. "I have about 50 minutes of footage with no sound. I was counting on getting backing from Embrafilme [the official state organ for film financing and distribution, now extinct] for the dubbing expenses, but they never gave me money for it and now they're gone. I'm stuck with it now as it is." (This project was reactivated recently.) Like many other low-budget filmmakers, he continues to shoot his movies MOS (without sound), to be dubbed later at a recording studio.

**W**ith all that hustle and bustle, Marins's health suffered a setback when his left eye got affected by a rare condition of which "only three cases are known in the world." To this date his left eye causes him excruciating pain. "Some people believe it is some kind of Macumba curse, but my doctor is trying to do whatever he can." He has always been obsessed with eyes in both his work and private life. "One of the things that I most fear in life is to lose my sight. I communicate exclusively through images, I couldn't do a thing without my eyes. When I wore contact lenses for the scenes where my eyes were injected in *À MEIA-NOITE...*, I got all jumpy. I was terrified with the thought of damaging my eyes. To lose my sight is to drop out from life: eyes are horror's means of expression." The eye condition gave him many sleepless nights. Nevertheless, in 1987 he appeared as an actor in a prestigious dramatic presentation, *A Mão Parda* ["The Dark Hand"], shown on public television. He believes it was missed opportunity, "it could have been much better." Francisco Cavalcanti then made a sequel to *A HORA DO MEDO*, a still unfinished feature entitled, for the moment, *A IRMÃ DO DEMÔNIO* ["The Devil's Sister"]. Marins plays the lead role in it, as "a scientist with beam-throwing fingernails who fights a man with beam-throwing eyes. It is still short of some 20 minutes to be releasable and [Cavalcanti] wants me to direct those 20 minutes. The leading actor of *A HORA...* [Alberto Kartinski] died in a car crash and we had to come up with all kinds of gimmicks for the follow-up, we used just a bit of footage from the original and got another actor for the part." Marins also acted in the short *A HORA DO BRASIL* ["Brazil's Hour," the former title of the official news program that all radio stations in Brazil are required by law to broadcast every evening at 7 PM], directed by "one of Goffredo [da Silva Telles]'s friends." He continued working in his drama school and spook-shows. A comic strip he first published in the late '60s, *Noite Negra*, was reissued in a deluxe edition in what he planned to be the first in a series of squarebound softcover books entitled—what else?—*O Estranho Mundo de Zé do Caixão*. Unfortunately the new publisher and Marins are in litigation and the second volume never came out.

The following year started auspiciously when Marins renewed his friendship with producer Augusto Pereira de Cervantes, with whom he had a falling out since the mid-70s. With Cervantes's backing, he finally began working on the script of the long-promised third episode of the Zé do Caixão saga. But soon his luck seemed to have run its course. Film director Ody Fraga, who was helping him with the screenplay, died unexpectedly, and Marins reached Aldenora de Sá Porto [the same woman who wrote the overripe dialog of *ESTA NOITE...*] for her input. Then producer Cervantes also passed away and the project fell apart once again. His eye condition got worse and, ironically, he was invited for a special guest appearance in some episodes of a TV soap called *Olho por Olho* ["An Eye for an Eye"]. "My role was more or less based on Robert De Niro's character [Lou Cypher] in *ANGEL HEART*." He also directed one scene for director Clery Cunha's *CABEÇAS TROCADAS* ["Switched Heads"], the yet-to-be finished film about a contract killer who kills the wrong man. Then came a challenge: to perform in a gigantic spook-show in the PlayCenter, a 2,400 sq.ft. amusement park transformed, for one evening, into a huge stage for a horror happening. He rose to the occasion and, in addition to his regular Zé do Caixão *grand-guignol* show, he had many of his cast and crew spread among the audience for some surprise pranks (for instance, an unsuspected 'visitor' to the park would suddenly pull off a scythe and decapitate his date, or an innocent-looking 'mother' would ask a visitor to hold her 'baby'—in fact a disgusting rubber monster) and put horror touches on all the rides in the park. The show was a huge hit and became a regular, weekly event throughout the month of August, under the umbrella title *Noites de Terror* ["Evenings of Horror"]. In 1989 Marins decided to shoot a movie during one of these performances, and wrote a story about a homicidal maniac stalking the audience who thinks he is part of the show. The movie, *NOITES DE TERROR DO PLAYCENTER* ["Evenings of Horror at the PlayCenter"] couldn't be completed because many special guests of the amusement park owners ended up appearing in the documentary footage and demanded an honorarium. "I really can't afford to pay all those people. I guess I have to edit out all the scenes they appear in, and shoot some [alternative] footage."



The late Giorgio Attili (right), the cinematographer for most of Marins's important work, setting up a shot for the film **PERVÊRSÃO** (1978) wherein Marins is about to bite the nipple off one of his female victims (Nádia Destro).

**T**he new decade started with another outrageous idea. When Dr. Ednei do Nascimento, Marins's ophthalmologist, performed surgery on the filmmaker's afflicted eye, the patient decided to have his own eye operation filmed for his next feature! "There I was, he cutting my eye up, the media people watching, reporters taking notes and I directing the shooting of my own eye surgery." He plans to incorporate the gruesome mondo footage into "the fourth episode" of the Zé do Caixão saga, now referred to as **O OLHO DO PORTAL DO INFERNO** ["The Eye in the Gates of Hell"]. Dr. Nascimento himself is producing the feature. "We're making this movie slowly, little by little, I shoot as the money comes in. So far I underwent three operations in my eye and I had them all filmed. Many people will think the surgery scene is some kind of a special effect, but the blood is real, the cuts are real—this is our Brazilian way of getting things done." Still in 1990, Marins played another villain in **JÚLIO, O MARGINAL** ["Júlio, the Outlaw"], directed by Francisco Cavalcanti's son Fabrício. Then he donned his cape and top hat again for what must have been the most unexpected role in his career—a benign, Zé do Caixão-lookalike E.T.! It was for another Wilson Rodrigues kiddie flick **O GATO DE BOTAS EXTRATERRESTRE** ["The Extraterrestrial Puss 'n Boots"]. "In this version Puss 'n Boots comes from another planet and I'm a good alien who helps him get rid of the Evil Wizard to save a bunch of children. The producer went to the U.S. and asked the **STAR WARS** crew [actually, Tom Burman Studios] to make him an expensive mask for Puss. What I didn't like is that there's nothing in the movie that reflects our culture—no Macumba, no Carnival, nothing. Since the producer changed the original story so much, he should also have incorporated something of our own culture."

In 1991 he teamed up with his daughter Mariliz, a model and actress, for a horror movie they would jointly direct, **TRINDADE MALDITA** ("The Evil Trinity"). "We gathered investors for this story where Zé do Caixão appears in the thoughts of a character. When the production was about to get going, [President] Collor held up everybody's money and we couldn't do a thing." At that time, the newly elected President—who, little did anyone know, would be unceremoniously impeached for grand larceny a year and a half later—suddenly ordered all assets in bank accounts throughout the country to be frozen, in a measure allegedly calculated to secure the banking system: everybody who had accounts of any significance lost big money then. Mariliz wrote a book, went to Italy and shot some commercials there; her father stayed and tried to make ends meet with more spook-shows and other live performances. The following year, with the poor economy still jeopardizing his plans, Marins shot a feature-length video called **A SEITA DOS ESPÍRITOS MALDITOS** ["The Cult of the Damned Souls"], which he hoped to turn into a TV series. "I shot it with my usual crew, my former students, and it was produced through the shares system. It is a horror story introduced by Zé do Caixão as a storyteller." (Marins recently decided to transfer this video to film stock, for a theatrical release.) Then he was hired by a radio station in Santos (a coastal city about 50 miles southeast of São Paulo) for a horror story show; he gave it up after three months because of the long commute. A little later he started a 'horror phone service', sort of a 900 number for people to call and hear a one-minute horror story told by Zé do Caixão. "It's crazy. The hard part is to come up with at least 365 new, minute-long stories for a year's

worth of calls." By the end of the year he was involved in the filming of **ALUCINAÇÃO MACABRA** ["Macabre Hallucination"]—a movie he finished shooting last February, now being readied for an August release. "I included leftovers from **DEMÔNIOS E MARAVILHAS** and put some journalist friends as guest stars, in this movie about a man who tells stories about Zé do Caixão. His listeners also have their own memories of Zé, and all those episodes are shown on screen."

**M**arins's latest involvement in a theatrical movie is again in a kiddie flick produced by Wilson Rodrigues. "He got the rights to a foreign horror cartoon—I don't know where it's from, it looks like it's Swedish—and I'm going to introduce and narrate it as Zé do Caixão. This project had good media coverage and will probably be very successful. Now Zé do Caixão is really going to reach out to kids: all my horror lines were written for children. We're shooting my scenes at the Consolação cemetery." This 'special edition' of the foreign cartoon is to be entitled **ZÉ DO CAIXÃO NA CIDADE DO TERROR** ["Zé do Caixão in the City of Horror"]. Today, kids and young adults are some of his biggest fans. "I don't know what really happened since 1991, but young people have been looking for me for advice ever since... Things have changed: all those young kids want to see my past work, while the old time fans still like my stuff."

Despite his declared abhorrence of politics, Marins seems more politically aware than ever. He has just run a play, apparently an adaptation of a *cordel* epic, **O Encontro de Zé do Caixão com Lampião** ["Zé do Caixão Meets Lampião"]. Lampião was the most famous of all *cangaceiros* and a folk hero for many, immortalized in *cordel*, literature, theater and film. "I produced that play in solidarity with our immigrants from the northeast, to call the [São Paulo] audience's attention to their sorrows, particularly after the recent harassment of them by a neo-Nazi gang." Last year he also joined student demonstrations, carrying his coffin in protest marches and giving fiery speeches. And he is preparing his first political satire, a comedy to be called **BRASIL COLLORÍDO** ["Collored Brazil"]—a pun on the name of the object of his parody, recently impeached President Fernando Collor. The plot is a sarcastic rendition of Genesis that exposes the financial, political and sexual scandals of the Collor household. Last May Marins announced a nationwide search for lookalikes of members of the disgraced presidential family to work in the movie. He came a long way since the time he declared he wasn't interested in politics "at all," and that he "wouldn't feel at ease making a political movie."

He is also writing his autobiography, a task he started in 1987 but that has been hindered by his eye condition. "My book will be a kind of guidebook for those who think of getting into the film business. I'm also going to spill the beans about things that very few people know. It'll be in three volumes, more or less [respectively] concentrated on my mystical side, on my artistic side and on my personal side—about the women in my life." This past Carnival a neighborhood samba group invited him to parade with them, and went out to the streets with ten large floaters decorated with huge Zé do Caixão effigies and motifs. Marins had a good time there, with dozens of dancers shuffling at songs celebrating his famous character. "But nine of the ten floaters broke down and got stuck in the parade. That's the curse that follows Zé do Caixão..."

**T**oday Marins is a happy man, living with his longtime companion Nilemar Leyart (his former script supervisor and film editor), always engaged in some kind of artistic endeavor or opportunity brings him. He is adamant in denying his identification with Zé do Caixão: "Zé is a selfish man who thinks he is superior because he can't love or hate. But of course this isn't true, people just can't be like that." To make the distinction very clear, he points out that José Mojica Marins is personally much more successful than Zé do Caixão. "All Zé wants is to have a son, which is denied him at every turn. Me, I have my children and I'm proud of having risen them well." (He doesn't say it lightly: Marins has no less than *twenty-four* children!) Regina Andrión, who lived in their house for many years as a guest and apprentice, says the fearsome-looking Marins "is in fact a vulnerable man who needs attention and protection, as it happens to many an only child." But the filmmaker himself doesn't like to say much about his personal life, at least until his autobiography is completed.

One of Marins's most prized possessions is his personal casket. Thirty years ago, Marins loaned two coffins for the shooting of *À MEIA NOITE...*. When a crew member died during the production, one of the caskets was actually used to bury the deceased, while the other was purchased by the filmmaker for future use. The second coffin—*his* coffin—has been with him all those years, and Marins carries it along wherever he goes. It was featured in films, TV shows, stage performances, interviews and personal appearances. It was once displayed in a shopping mall for a month, and people lined up to lie in it for pictures. The coffin's birthday is an yearly event attended by the press: while the guests are offered slices of a large, casket-shaped cake, the actual coffin "speaks" from a concealed mike to all who'll listen. "My coffin knows all the cemeteries in São Paulo and in Rio. I take good care of him [sic], and every year I refit him a little. He says one thing that bugs him is that he is lonely, only men get inside him. He needs a girlfriend." All his personal appearances—including the student demonstrations he took part in to protest for more government funding for public schools ("Out of the coffin to fight for education!")—invariably start with four of his acolytes solemnly bringing out his coffin: then Marins, fully clad in his Zé do Caixão outfit, rises and starts his customary ranting and raving.

Marins believes his movies have a therapeutic effect on the audience. "I think we all wear masks. We are all sadists and masochists, even if we refuse to admit it. A typical member of my audience tells his friends he hates me, that he'll never go see any of my movies—but he *does* go see 'em anyway, in hiding, and deep inside he feels quite happy in watching those forbidden acts he'd like to do himself. Then, satiated, he walks out badmouthing me, saying I'm a mental basket case, a pervert and the like.

But his mind is clear and he feels great." His anticlerical stance is genuine, although he is not exactly an atheist. "I believe there are indeed strange things science can't explain. I don't know if there is an explanation after all, if they are caused by some extraterrestrial force or by the mindpower of human beings. I think there is a god out there, but I don't believe in religion or in priests. I just tolerate all religions without believing in any." That stance obviously doesn't endear him among the clergy: although his spook-shows are popular enough to incite small-town politicians to invite Marins to perform locally under their auspices, the Catholic Church and the now prolific, US-based Evangelical Christians are always threatening with hellfire and brimstone those doomed sinners who attend such debased extravaganzas.

Above all, Marins is a man of outrageous imagination. Some may point out at similarities between his plots and those of other authors, but he denies any intentional plagiarism. "I can write one story a day, but that doesn't mean that, at the same time, there couldn't be anyone writing the exact same story, somewhere else in the world. I write my own way, so even if you find a similar story elsewhere, you'll never see the same details I put in my writing. My movies belong to that 'cinema of invention' that [film critic] Jairo Ferreira once talked about—the kind of movie that is mine, hopelessly mine."

One final thought: "I'd love a challenge like my going to the U.S. and someone there saying, 'Would you make a picture for me?', asking me to shoot a feature in a week, for theatrical or straight-to-video release. I'd love to make a movie there [in the U.S.], to show what we could do without those elaborate, expensive special effects. It would take a *jeitinho brasileiro*—that special Brazilian touch..."

#### POST-SCRIPT

As this article is being written (July 1993), Marins is in the course of shooting simultaneously *two* TV series of 20 episodes each: *A Terceira Força* ["The Third Power"]—a fantasy/horror show about early souls "trapped between Heaven and Hell since Creation, after having refused to chose either God or the Devil and opted for a third way, and now walking among us"; and *Cavaleiros do Armageddon: A Chave do Desconhecido* ["Riders of Armageddon: The Key to the Unknown"]—"the adventures a young paranormal woman who holds the secrets of Armageddon and is threatened by evil cultists." In other media, he is publishing his minute-long radio horror tales in an illustrated book entitled *Crônicas de Terror de Zé do Caixão* ["Zé do Caixão's Horror Chronicles"]. We obviously haven't heard the last of José Mojica Marins.



**José Mojica Marins  
as Zé do Caixão,  
still scaring millions  
of Brazilians in 1993.**



# ZÉ DO CAIXÃO

## PORTRAIT OF THE SADIST AS A YOUNG MADMAN

Submitted for your appreciation (as a legendary TV host would say) the following personal profile: Eccentric man with bushy eyebrows and abundant facial hair. Impetuous elitist, passionate individualist. Social misfit, conceited and pitiless. Rejects accepted norms of culture and creed, placing self above traditional moral constraints. Launches virulent diatribes against God and faith, targetting especially the loathed Catholic religion. Believes in the primacy of unconscious human drives. Has as main conviction the ideal of a 'will to power', personified by the Superior Man—a shrewd, self-interested, ruthless and cruel being for whose benefit the suffering of the masses, those 'wretched bunglers' of humankind, is of no importance. Champions selective breeding to assure purity of superior stocks. Unabashedly sexist, thinks women are meant to please and serve men, and should be so persuaded through intimidation if necessary. Relishes in spelling out his ideas in aphorisms and catchphrases.

These are some of the most notorious attributes of real-life late 19th century German literary philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the man we love to hate. These are also the main traits of reel-life mid-20th century Brazilian provincial undertaker Zé do Caixão, the man we hate to love. If the comparison seems too cute or too outrageous, it is only because Nietzsche (a) was a real person and (b) masterfully articulate in the use of language, while Zé (a) is a fictional character and (b) often muddled and absolutely incoherent in his ramblings. (Sure, Nietzsche did and meant a lot more than this simplistic profile suggests. He also unwittingly inspired a bunch of pathologically whacked-out camp-followers such as Adolf Hitler

and Ayn Rand. For his part, Zé has had a much wider personal experience with women than our Herr Professor could ever hope for, if at all. And he didn't leave a trail of disturbed fans in high places.) One thing is positively certain: self-educated horror film auteur José Mojica Marins had never heard of Nietzsche—or of autism for that matter—when he created his infamous character, the byproduct of a bad dream.

In *A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA* (1963), Zé do Caixão is introduced as a provincial undertaker, all clad in black, often wearing a top hat, a cloak and gloves that conceal his pointy fingernails. Also, he's got a serious attitude problem. He finds the simple citizens of his hometown annoying; he feels 'sick and tired of those rubes', his own unwitting customers, and takes pleasure in making their existence miserable. Perverse and arrogant, spending most of his time bullying and abusing them viciously, Zé's only concern is the notion of his own innate superiority. Realising the need to perpetuate this self-proclaimed glory, he gets more and more obsessed with siring a son; but to get a real chip off the old block he'd have to make use of a 'perfect woman'—an ideal of both physical beauty and total submission to his greatness. So his mission in life becomes the quest for that elusive top-notch childbearing womb, which, in spite of himself, he seems to have no problem looking for among the despicable masses. Naturally, Zé's mating behavior is strictly for functional purposes only; after all, he should be above trivial human emotions. (It's tempting to imagine fact and fiction twisting and merging across hemispheres to have this fascist-libertarian nutcase as Ayn Rand's own secret hate-child.)

It is then for pure shock effect that Zé is established as having both a wife (how did it happen?) and a friend, who are blind to his crimes and inevitably end up paying dearly for their misplaced trust. Just how low can he go? We are left to imagine that in a previous phase of his life he was a more tolerant, if odd, character who somehow lost his bearings. Anyway, all this would still be a picture of conventional villainy if Marins didn't choose to make Zé a more complex, elaborate kind of crackpot. To that effect, the filmmaker cleverly has him as the very center of the movie, so everything is viewed through Zé's gaze. He is treated as the protagonist, not the nemesis to some trusty good guy the audience is supposed to cheer for. He is a genuine antihero with no opposite counterpart among the groveling rabble he so despises. There is no sense of symmetry, or even of a showdown between powerful contraries: the audience is denied of a Nayland Smith or a Van Helsing able to fight this vile man. (This is probably a 'first' in horror movies, predating Dr. Phibes by a decade). In the end, he is defeated not by the traditional forces of (Christian) Good, but by his major weakness—his own troubled conscience. Which brings us to Zé's most interesting trait: he is an imperfect Superior Man, reluctantly aware of not being up to his own standards. Full of self-doubt, he needs to reaffirm his assertiveness at regular intervals with his patented, hysterical bouts of ranting and raving, admitting his flaws at the same time he lambastes current community standards. His exaggerated kindness toward children (boys, that is; no girl has ever found his favor) is less a reflection of his

## COFFIN JOE, COFFIN SCHMOE!

The worst kind of ignorant is one who refuses to learn. Some benighted Americans, too dumb to snap out of their parochial stupor, insist on calling Marins's most (in)famous character 'Coffin Joe'. Just because *caixão* means 'coffin' and Zé is the short form of José or Joseph, it doesn't follow you should translate a person's name for the benefit of your standard-issue inbred Bible-belt/KKK retardo. To call him 'Coffin Joe' is as stupid as to have Joe Friday dubbed 'Peppino Venerdi' by know-nothing Italians, or Indiana Jones rendered as 'Piauí de Souza' by Brazilians incapable of appreciating a foreign culture. So call him Zé do Caixão, or 'Coffin Zé' if you absolutely have to, but not 'Joe'—the character lives in Brazil, for chrissakes, where *nobody* is named 'Joe'! (The last Brazilian Joe was Joe Carioca, the cartoon parrot from *SALUDOS AMIGOS* (1942) and *THE THREE CABALLEROS* (1944)—two pieces of the hypocritical "good neighborhood" US propaganda policy of the '40s, dumped on Latin America courtesy of Uncle Disney.) The bottom line is, if you don't want to pass for the global village idiot, just say 'Zé do Caixão'. And don't give me that crap about your terminal American monolingualism, that pathetic excuse of lazy mental eunuchs. If you can say 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' you can damn fuckin' well say ZEH-dough-kySHAWN!!



longing for immortality than of his own maladjustment, as if he would be more at ease trapped forever in childhood. And, no matter how much he loathes the Hicks he lives among, he'll surely never leave that small backward countryside where he is king-of-the-hill. This is a *modest* megalomaniac; we should take comfort in knowing that even Übermenschen are not absolutes. Who's afraid of Ross Perot?

**Z**é do Caixão is at it again in **ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADAVER** (1966) with both his depravity and insecurity shot up to the stratosphere. We learn his real name is Josefel Zanatas (an anagram for 'Satanaz', an old form of 'Satan'), and that he somehow recovered his sight and let his fingernails grow to obscene proportions. He also comes now with a battery of attributes associated with horror movie clichés: a deformed, hunchbacked assistant; a funeral home-cum-castle for his lair, complete with dungeons, torture chambers, trapdoors and a laboratory (how can he afford all that?); and, in his first step toward genuine film monsterdom, Svengalian hypnotic powers that make him irresistible to women. This well-worn bag of tricks helps him reach new lows in the sickness scale. For instance, in the first movie Zé had a woman strangle a canary while he raped her: here he relishes in watching his victims in various stages of agonizing death while he is doing the old in-out with a willing bedmate. But for all his depravity and Machiavellian scheming, in one of Marins's boldest moves, Zé is finally made *sympathetic* to the audience. Opposing Zé now is the entire, previously unseen local establishment represented by the Colonel, a powerful robber-baron who 'owns' the town and sends for hired killers to rough him up. Rich landowners and mercenaries are stock villains in *cangaço* epics and rural shoot-'em-ups—and by the time those goons set out to confront Zé, the sadistic undertaker becomes a *victim* who heroically defends himself the right to join his own family! Add to the Colonel's side a half-witted bully of a bodyguard and a lofty, reactionary clergyman—and the peculiar unbalance mentioned above is further tipped: instead of a clash between good and evil, we have a contest between bad and worse. The audience knows exactly whom to root for.

Also, and more remarkably, Zé actually *does* find the Perfect Woman he wanted, and gets more than he bargained for. He doesn't realize it when he first meets her, but Laura, the Colonel's daughter, proves Zé's true match in terms of Nietzschean (or rather Randian), calculated ruthlessness. This woman is even more callous and heartless than our antihero, perfectly self-confident and dispensing with any outbursts of hysteria. (Significantly, she returns from the big city and is obviously educated, thus 'above' the ignorant provincial populace. Perhaps because of his own lack of formal schooling, Marins seems to associate high learning with some sort of cold rationality and insensitivity to human suffering. This notion also applies to Zé's 'mirror' alter ego, Professor Oaxiac Odez; see below.) Laura accepts Zé as her superior mate and encourages him to be pitiless every time his self-esteem is shaky: it is she who assures Zé there is no God or Devil, no Heaven or Hell, after a lurid nightmare reduces him to quivering jelly. She is finally too perfect to survive: that she dies giving birth neatly dispels Zé's own fear of having to concede his superiority to someone else—a woman, to boot! (This latter theme may be developed further in a planned episode where Zé's long-awaited offspring is revealed to be a *girl*.)

**T**he Zé do Caixão saga was interrupted when funding for the next installment proved hard to come by. The character had died by drowning in the previous episode and, since his 'official' return was reserved for the ever-elusive third chapter, he was moved to the background of Marins's subsequent movies as a supernatural or imaginary creature who lived in his own limbo, his so-called 'Strange World'. (Marins himself changed a bit physically as he put on more weight; also, the official Zé do Caixão costume now incorporated a gold-ring chain across his chest, fastening his cloak.) This kind of lesser exposure—from now on Zé's appearances would be essentially plotless—ended up empowering him, paradoxically, with mythical stature. As it happened to a James Dean or a Bruce Lee, 'dying young' made him an unaccountable, empty vessel for his audience to project into him whatever expectations it had in mind, and Marins and his screenwriter Rubens F. Luchetti took them to heart at the expense of Zé's 'true' self.

So the character went through a radical identity crisis. The original Zé was a self-delusional, egocentric small-town undertaker-with-an-attitude, but ultimately a regular mortal being whose personal ethics (or lack thereof) were based on a totally skeptical mindset about anything supernatural. The 'other' Zé apparently branched out from the Zé-as-host/narrator who introduced both **À MEIA-NOITE...** and **ESTA NOITE...**, staying on the sidelines of the story proper. Over the years, this newfangled Zé turned into not only a true believer of the supernatural but also *part* of it. The new Zé became an otherworldly entity endowed with vaguely defined powers and surrounded by demonic minions, presiding over the torture of doomed souls in his 'Strange World'—a sort of a private, infernal Twilight Zone—and rambling on incomprehensible harangues with no pretenses of coherence. (This distortion of the character reached its nadir in the glossy **EXORCISMO NEGRO** (1974), where he is clearly an agent of Evil, possessing the souls of innocent people, leading them to temptation and—in the worst transgression of the Zé do Caixão mythos—having a *daughter* of his marrying Satan's son!) In short, Zé II became a legitimate if conventional Monster, in the same unnatural order of things shared by vampires and ghouls. It is this revamped Zé who survived, and who accounts for his own current popularity and folkloric status as a boogeyman in bedtime stories for disobedient little children.

**I**t should be noted that there was also an 'alternative incarnation' of Zé in **O ESTRANHO MUNDO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO** (1968)—the anagrammatic 'Professor Oaxiac Odez'. This 'new' character wears an earring and a bizarre wig with the hair straightened and combed back like a big turban; his manners are mock-polite, his talk semicultivated and pseudoscientific, his personal obsession the supremacy of the Id. The Professor represents pretty much what Zé could have become had he gone to school. Self-confident and coolly sadistic—genuinely Sadean in fact—he reflects Marins's wariness of the overeducated. Indeed, it wouldn't been too far-fetched to compare him with the other anthropophagous intellectual in movies, Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Besides their common eating habits, both are learned men and dedicated researchers in their respective fields—scholars, philosophers and empiricists; they are also amoral eminences who spurn traditional notions of right and wrong. Lecter is a twisted embodiment of Western civilization at its pinnacle—achievements in science, logic, art, esthetics—gone obviously awry: for him, cannibalism is simply a refinement of a natural development of his/our culture. (He is definitively *not* a symbol of 'pure evil', as naively characterized elsewhere.) Professor Odez is not nearly as sophisticated, but he is also too detached and cerebral to be truly 'evil': his most outrageous acts are done in the name of knowl-

edge, and his ghoulish delight derives less from any particular enjoyment of atrocity than from the intellectual satisfaction of having a pet theory proved right before his very eyes. The difference between the two is a matter of latitude and attitude. Northern European-American Lecter wouldn't touch human liver without a complement of fava beans and a glass of chianti, while in the hunger-ridden Third World Professor Odez avidly gobbles up body parts without as much as a grain of salt. One is a gourmet, the other a *gourmand*.

**T**he change in personality that affected Zé do Caixão was accompanied by a not-so-ear-nest move to dissociate the character from his creator, as Marins became more aware of his public image. In **RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS/O DESPERTAR DA BESTA** (1969), a sarcastic personal riposte to his detractors disguised as an exploitation flick, Marins-the-Filmmaker proclaims himself a genius who invented Zé do Caixão as an anything-goes reflection of the personal concerns of his fans and critics alike. Further developments, however, were distinct missteps. In the following two movies, Zé was demoted from antihero to a mere villain, counterbalanced by a new protagonist—Marins-the-Filmmaker, an increasingly bourgeois and smooth-talking, obviously dubbed good-guy who fights him in the name of God(!). Undaunted, Zé continued to appear as a recognizable monstrous icon in other features, shorts and live shows. By the late 80s, Marins was even playing all-but-in-name versions of Zé do Caixão—one of them from outer space!—in a couple of kiddie flicks. As Zé's popularity increased, then came the inevitable attempts at imitation and parody: the title character in **O MACABRO DR. SCIVANO** ["The Macabre Dr. Scivano" (1971), directed by Raul Calhadeo and Rosalvo Caçador—the latter an actor in many Marins movies] was made up to look exactly like you-know-who, down to the joint eyebrows; and a TV comedy show of the early '70s featured a certain *Zé do Colchão* ["Zé of the Mattress"]—a bearded dude in black with a top hat and long fingernails who rose from his box-spring to rant and rave nonsense.

**O**ne of the most common questions Marins is asked in interviews is whether he and Zé do Caixão are the same person. The standard answer is that Zé is a kind of evil twin who can do things Marins wouldn't dare to, so by creating the character he could purge his own repressed desires. He also hopes his viewers would be temporarily released from their pent-up daily frustrations while watching Zé "doing what they all secretly want to do". That includes actions that run across the ideological spectrum, from healthy subversion of the power structure and anti-clericalism (which Marins firmly endorses), to the most depressing displays of brutality, sexism and overall abuse of human rights—all tinged with regular displays of anxiety. This ambivalence that made the 'original' Zé such an uneasily compelling antihero is lost in the Supernatural-Zé movies, where only his atrocities are focused. Whether or not viewers do vicariously experience the excesses of any of the 'two' Zés hasn't been yet put to test. For the audience seems not to care about the difference between them, or about any distinction between monster and filmmaker. As proven in his 1982 electoral adventure, Marins continues to be inseparably identified with his creation in the public mind. Now at the peak of his popularity, across different age and social groups, José Mojica Marins/Zé do Caixão is truly a national institution.

Acontecimentos verídicos dos anais secretos de ZÉ DO CAIXÃO

# NOITE NEGRA

ESTÓRIA DE  
JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS  
ROTEIRO  
R. F. LUCCHETTI  
ILUSTRAÇÕES

*Alto Rojo*

COLABORAÇÃO  
J.B. ROSA

EXISTE REALMENTE  
O DESTINO? ESTA É UMA  
PERGUNTA MILENAR QUE VEM  
DESAFIANDO OS HOMENS. SÁ-  
BIOS OU IGNORANTES, CADA QUAL  
PROCURA DAR UMA EXPLICAÇÃO  
PARA O MISTÉRIO QUE REGE NOS-  
SAS VIDAS. A MAIORIA DOS MOR-  
TAIS NÃO ACEITAM COM RESIGNA-  
ÇÃO A FATALIDADE QUE SOBRE ELES  
SE ABATE E PROCURAM MODIFI-  
CAR A TODO O CUSTO O RU-  
MO DOS ACONTECIMENTOS  
MAS, CUIDADO! VEJA  
AS CONSEQUÊNCIAS  
QUE ISSO PODE  
TRAZER.



*Title Page from a Zé do Caixão comic book.*



# DIRECTED BY JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS



## AN ANNOTATED FILMOGRAPHY

Titles of completed or quasi-completed feature films are in **BOLD CAPITALS**; of completed short films, amateur films, TV series and episodes in anthologies, in **bold lowercase**; of proposed and/or unfinished projects, and early and alternate titles, in **PLAIN CAPITALS**. Translated titles, in double quotes and brackets ['], are contextual and unofficial. All dates are production dates. Comments in double quotes are by Marins himself.

### AMATEUR FILMS IN 16 mm

Between 1942 and 1944, the young Marins made 17 short- to feature-length silent movies in 16mm that were shown in public halls and circus tents in small towns near São Paulo. He and his cast would read their lines on stage through the PA system as the movies were being projected. (While many Japanese films shown in the Brazilian countryside through the mid-'30s were silent features accompanied by a *benshi*—a commentator/storyteller who punctuated the action with dialog, song and sound effects—it is unlikely that Marins ever saw any of them. His kind of 'silent film with simultaneous dubbing' was strictly a result of lack of resources.)

The titles and plot summaries below were given by Marins himself in the course of our first interview. In an astonishing display of memory, he enumerated all movies in the order they were made, without checking notes, explaining each project in some detail. Since none of these films (except for a reel of *Pesadelo*) survived and no documentation on them exists, it is impossible to verify the accuracy of his account. Some plot particulars, notably those with science fiction overtones, indeed strain one's credibility as having been concocted by working-class Brazilian teenagers during the war years. *Caveat lector*.

#### A Mágica do Mágico ["The Magician's Magic"] (1942)

A beggar finds a book on the occult and conjures an imp who makes him very rich. But the beggar is over-ambitious and soon loses everything the imp brought him.

#### As Almas Perdidas da Ilha de Salanás ["The Lost Souls of Satan's Island"] (1942)

A gang of dropouts ends up in a reputedly accursed island. Strange happenings like an earthquake, spooky apparitions, etc. haunt the place and cause the death of most of the newcomers. The island eventually sinks and a missile is seen coming out of it. The only survivor realizes the place was controlled by aliens from outer space, but nobody believes his story. "The movie ran a hour and ten minutes."

#### A Greve dos Vagabundos ["The Tramps' Strike"] (1942)

A tramp realizes he is a dead ringer for a famous American actor and impersonates the latter so as to bring more publicity to the God-forsaken alley where he and his friends live.

#### Reino Sangrento ["Bloody Kingdom"] (1942)

After a botched bank robbery, two men hide in the Amazonian jungle. There they discover a lost city ruled by a tyrant, where they meet historical characters such as Samson, Hercules and Julius Caesar. They lead a revolt against the tyrant and return to civilization: only their scars prove the legitimacy of their account.

#### Beijos a Granel ["Kisses by the Dozen"] (1942)

The members of a cult preach free love among them and go about naked. Little by little, they form steady couples and start getting dressed again.

#### O Juízo Final ["Judgment Day"] (1943)

The Biblical prophecies of Judgment Day: the skies tear open, the ground is engulfed in flames. Marins claims he used many special effects for this movie.

#### Sonho de Vagabundo ["Dreams of a Tramp"] (1943)

A tramp dreams of riches and power; slowly, dreams and reality start getting mixed up.

#### Feitiçaria ["Sorcery"] (1943)

Looking for revenge, a man resorts to a sorceress. The movie allegedly includes many scenes of Macumba rituals, some authentic, some re-enacted.

#### A Voz do Coveiro ["The Voice of the Gravedigger"] (1943)

A gravedigger desecrates tombs to rob jewels for his daughter. The girl only realizes the origin of her jewels after her father dies: she is visited by his ghost, who asks her to return the gems to the various corpses that owned them, so he can rest in peace.

#### Sombra Cadavérica ["Cadaverous Shadow"] (1943)

An ambitious man murders his partner; before dying, the latter swears to return reincarnated in the body of some other

deceased person. The murderer avoids getting close to any corpse—but then his wife dies in a car accident...

#### Retrato de Cristo ["Portrait of Christ"] (1944)

A skeptic destroys a picture of Christ. His daughter gets terribly sick and only recovers when he restores the portrait.

#### Geração Maldita ["Doomed Generation"] (1944)

Two hoodlums, one rich and the other poor, fight for the same girl. They end up in court and the judge, bribed by the rich youth's parents, sentences the poor one to jail. The indicted man slays his rival with a razor and is shot to death by corrupt cops.

#### Entre a Vida e a Morte ["Between Life and Death"] (1944)

A lucky professional gambler is advised by a gypsy woman to give up gambling after his wedding. He ignores her and continues his activity until he loses everything. He ends up betting his own wife, who then kills herself.

#### Encruzilhada da Perdição ["Crossroads of Doom"] (1944)

Two friends fall in love with the same woman. They face each other in a duel while the object of their attention herself flees with an unknown third man.

#### O que Vem Depois da Morte ["What Comes After Death"] (1944)

Having tasted everything life has to offer, a millionaire feels bored and offers a fortune to whoever could provide him with a new experience. A magician accepts the challenge and shoots the millionaire, therefore giving him something he never experienced before—death.

#### Pesadelo ["Nightmare"] (1944)

A dead man recalls his many reincarnations. "Sometimes we dream of death; here a dead man dreams of life."

#### Pecado e Dívida ["Sin and Indebtedness"] (1944)

In her youth, a woman caused the ruin of many men. Now forty, she falls in love with a young man half her age, not knowing he is her own son...

## FEATURE FILMS IN 35 mm

Listed here are all completed or quasi-completed feature-length films (and one short episode in a feature) directed officially or unofficially by Marins, with cast and credits and a plot synopsis. (The title *ÉRAMOS IRMÃOS* ["We Were Brothers"], mistakenly attributed to him in some filmographies, is in fact a melodrama directed by Renato Ferreira in 1956 and has nothing to do with Marins.) As for US video availability, only authorized issues are mentioned, under the official title on the print. Genre films seen by this author are reviewed.

## A SINA DO AVENTUREIRO (1959)

["The Adventurer's Fate"] *p* co- Indústria Cinematográfica Apolo. *dist*: Programa Barone. *d/scr*: José Mojica Marins. *ph*: Honório Marins. *art d*: Graveto. *ed*: Luiz Elias. *m*: Eubalu. *sd*: GravaSom. *as d*: João Jalter. *p mgr*: Fernando Rodrigues. *as p mgr*: João da Silva. *script sup*: Walter Preusse. *as cam*: Corinto Fioredori. *songs performed by* José Mojica Marins, Tônia Eletta, Ruth Ferreira, João Dias, Titulares do Ritmo, Vagalumes do Luar & Duo Brasil. *p*: Augusto Pereira [later Augusto de Cervantes] & Nilza de Lima. *cast*: Acácio de Lima, Shirley Alves, Augusto Pereira, Ruth Ferreira, Geraldo Martins, Tônia Eletta, Zanolim, Duarte Brandão, José Mojica Marins, Graveto, Renato Martinetti, Edson Pires, Edna Carmen, Araba Alves, Eubalu, Antônio Boldrim, Sibila Marchetti, Alaerte Leão, Dionísio Luzzi, Alvaro Franzeiro, Nádia Ferreira, Mário de Souza, Francisco Moreno, João Roberto, Leonardo Russo, Mário Bianco, Benedito Gomes, José Neto. *Widescreen* ("Gigantela"), black & white. *rt*: 105 min.

**Synopsis.** A wounded gunslinger rests by a river where two girls are bathing; he is taken to their father's farm, where he slowly recovers. In love with one of the girls, he abides by her advice and surrenders to the sheriff. While he serves time, a gang of outlaws massacres the farmer's family. The gunslinger is released and, breaking his promise never to shoot again, goes after the murderers. He kills them all and dies after finishing off the gang leader.

**Notes and comments.** The first Brazilian movie shot in widescreen and, excepting a couple of parodies, very probably the first western made in Brazil. Scenes of extreme violence—particularly one where the hero coldly executes an entire family in revenge—and casual nudity prompted Catholic authorities to give the film a 'condemnable' rating, a label Marins would have to get used to in the years to come. 'José Mojica Marins is the murderer of Brazilian cinema' (Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, writer and essayist).

## MEU DESTINO EM TUAS MÃOS (1961)

["My Destiny in Your Hands"] *p* co- Indústria Cinematográfica Apolo. *dist*: NTM. *d/scr*: José Mojica Marins. *ph*: Rui Santos. *art d*: José Vedovato. *ed*: Máximo Barro. *m*: Hermínio Gimenez. *sd*: GravaSom. *titles*: Milton Enke, Arlindo da Silva, Roberto da Costa & José Garbero. *gaffer*: Alex Belar. *as ed*: Ebbu Picchu. *p*: Augusto Pereira & Nilza de Lima. *cast*: Franquito (Franquito), Alvin Cassiano (Crispim), Nilton Batista (Robertinho), Delmo de Marcos (Quinzinho), José Mojica Marins (Franquito's Father), Tônia Eletta, Magda Mei (= Neutra Silva), Raul Malentaqui, Zilda Castro, Marlene Gonçalves, Nelson Aiolo, Eurípides da Silva, Antônio Marins. *Black & white*. *rt*: 90 min.

**Synopsis.** Five kids from different households run away from home and get involved in petty crimes, until they are sent to a reform school where their lives are changed by a group of dedicated educators.

**Notes and comments.** A film made "strictly for money", under the auspices of a Catholic organization (despite Marins's track record), intent on launching the ultimately short-lived career of child actor Franquito as a prospective role-model for Brazilian kids. Contemporary critics groaned, 'José Mojica Marins is a pervert.'

## À MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA (1963)

["At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul Away"] *p* co- Indústria Cinematográfica Apolo. *dist*: Ibéria Filmes/NTM. *d/scr*: José Mojica Marins. *ph*: Giorgio Attili. *art d*: José Vedovato. *ed*: Luiz Elias. *m*: [library]. *sd*: Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *makeup*: Gilberto Marques. *sp opt fx*: Produções Cinematográficas Indriks

Kruskops. *set assistants*: Gené Carvalho, Giovanni Lozanis & Luiz Gonçalves. *cam*: Osvaldo de Oliveira. *p mgr*: Nelson Gaspari. *script sup*: Magda Mei & Waldomiro França. *gaffer*: Antônio de Souza. *electr*: Waldomiro Reis. *grip*: José Saverie. *prop*: Índio. *sp contact lenses*: Solótica. *sd mix*: Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*: Líder. *p*: Geraldo Martins Simões, Ilídio Martins Simões & Arildo Iruam. *cast*: José Mojica Marins (Zé do Caixão), Magda Mei (Terezinha), Nivaldo de Lima (Antônio), Eucaris 'Karé' de Moraes (Gypsy Woman), Valéria Vasquez (Lenita), Ilídio Martins Simões (Dr. Rodolfo), Luana (Marta), Arildo Iruam (Maria's Uncle), Vânia Rangel (Maria), Gené Carvalho (Bald Man), Luiz Gonçalves (Zerequiel, the Gambler), Graveto (Bonifácio), Waldomiro França (Commissioner Barretos), Mário Lima (Deputy), Antônio Marins (Francisco, the Bartender), Eurípides da Silva (Father Who Punishes Kid), Carmen Marins (D. Joana, the Widow), Robinson Aiolo, Avelino Moraes, Leandro Vieira, Cícero Paulino Cardoso, Johnny Grégio, José Vilar, Suzy Baros, Tomás Sebastião, Iko Galdine, Laura Duarte, Claudiana, Renato Melo, Almir Barbosa, Raul Malentaqui. *Black & white*. *rt*: 81 min. *US video release*: AT MIDNIGHT I'LL TAKE YOUR SOUL AWAY (Something Weird Video).

**Synopsis.** A gypsy woman warns the viewers to skip this movie—too late, alas, for now they will have to endure the horrors to come... A country undertaker known as Zé do Caixão holds the population of a small town in a grip of terror. A blasphemous atheist, he never misses a chance to scorn the townsfolk's religious beliefs and show his contempt for the Church. He ostensibly eats meat on Good Friday (a serious Catholic taboo) and forces a pious man to do the same. He chops off the fingers of a man who can't cover his poker bet, then sends for the doctor and 'generously' offers to pay for his victim's treatment. A bald man who tries to put an end to Zé's excesses is savagely beaten up and humiliated. Though married to long-suffering Lenita, Zé has no children and is obsessed with siring a son, for he thinks a child is the continuity of one's bloodline; in fact, despite his sadistic behavior, he is peculiarly kind to kids. Zé thinks of himself as a superior man yet to meet 'the perfect woman' who will bear him a child—and sets his eyes on Terezinha, the fiancée of his only friend, simple-minded Antônio. He sets out to seduce her and, as a first step, gets rid of his own wife subjecting her to the lethal bite of a tarantula. As their wedding day approaches, Antônio and Terezinha invite Zé to join them for a fortune-telling session with the gypsy woman, who offers some disturbing predictions to all. It doesn't take long for Zé to treacherously drown Antônio and rape the grief-stricken Terezinha; the abused woman swears to return from the grave to 'take [Zé's] soul away', and hangs herself. Zé ridicules the offerings left by believers at the local graveyard, rants an angry challenge to the spirits of the dead and is reminded of his impending doom by the gypsy woman. After Terezinha's funeral, the local doctor gets suspicious and writes a report to the authorities; but his eyes are gouged out by Zé, who also sets fire to his body. Months pass, and by November 2, the Day of the Dead, Zé continues to terrorize the folks gathered in the local saloon. He smashes the crown of thorns from a Christimage on the face of a man who tried to defend his niece from the undertaker's lecherous advances. Later, he offers to escort pretty newcomer Marta to her aunt's house, since nobody else dares do it, afraid of bumping into the Procession of the Dead that supposedly haunts the graveyard that particular night. Zé behaves gentlemanly with Marta, planning to make the right moves on her later; but on his way back, he realizes the gypsy woman's prophecies are being fulfilled one by one. He eventually encounters the procession of the wandering souls and sees himself being carried in a casket. In panic, he takes refuge in a crypt and finds the coffins of Antônio and Terezinha: trying to prove himself, he rips them open and sees the decomposing bodies of his two victims, their faces being devoured by writhing worms. The shock drives Zé out of his mind and, when the townspeople arrive, they find him like dead, his bulging eyes gazing empty...

**Notes and comments.** The first full-blooded horror film produced in Brazil (there were a few supernatural fantasies before) is also a landmark in genre history. Its uncompromising, go-for-the-jugular tone is set out right in the opening credits, where the characters are introduced in clips from their respective gory death scenes. The fourth wall is broken twice in those introductory moments, first by Zé do Caixão (in ever-tightening close shots) and then by the gypsy woman, as if they were chroniclers of the story they themselves appear in: it is a

great coup de théâtre that perfectly bespeaks Marins's confident sense of showmanship, as the sequence builds up dramatically until the tagline 'DIRECTED BY JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS' fades in under thunderous sound effects.

The film proper is concise and straightforward, built around a single point-of-view. Because it is entirely developed from the perspective of its central character—structurally, this could be the horror movie counterpart to TAXI DRIVER—the various set-pieces that form the story don't smack of being disconnected episodes arbitrarily put together to maximize spectacle (as in an Indiana Jones flick, for instance); rather, they look like flashes of someone's twisted mind—or Marins's 'real' life nightmare?—ordered to chronicle Zé's rise and downfall, a progression of truculence leading to self-mortification (the incredible thunder and lightning raving session in the funeral parlor) and ultimate descent into madness. And yes, the film is, like many horror movies, essentially a morality play. What is surprising is that this cautionary tale doesn't end with the traditional reaffirmation of Christian values: Zé is not punished by God Almighty (or some authorized earthly representative) but by his own conscience, not for lack of faith but for want of humanity. It is a moralistic ending, but an unexpectedly non-sectarian one, particularly considering the overwhelming power the Catholic Church had at the time over Brazilian society.

Making the best of a budget that could be charitably called shoestring, Marins achieves results that are both economical and highly effective: an injected-eye effect produced with contact lenses loaned by an optician (predating DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE by five years), unnerving 'whipping and wailing' sound effects taken from Mario Nascimben's famous score for BARABBAS, rotten-flesh makeup built up with bread dough, a regular religious ritual footage turned into the 'Procession of the Dead' by simply printing its negative image (like the coach sequence in NOSFERATU). Two very talented and underappreciated craftsmen deserve mention here: film editor Luiz Elias and cinematographer Giorgio Attili. Elias, currently working on TV commercials, had a great sense of timing and knew precisely how long to sustain the same shot and keep the pace. Italian-born Attili (who died in 1988) could bring off Bava-caliber atmospheric visuals in monochrome and first-class virtuoso camerawork without fancy equipment (witness his 'tracking shots' taken with no dolly). And he could do it in just one take: if Marins had to get it right in the first try, Attili was the man to do it—so the single, continuous shot that first introduces Marta to Zé and then follows them out of the saloon, if done strictly out of economic necessity, comes out in his



hands like a Brian De Palma job without the affectation.

Although much of the movie's infamous reputation is due to its shocking violence and brutality, it would be unfair to dismiss it as just a gory cinematic sloppy-joe in the Herschell Gordon Lewis tradition. In the use of film language, self-learned Marins is infinitely superior to college-educated Lewis, deftly negotiating horror and melodrama with an instinctive eye for composition, rhythm and dramatic effect, establishing a personal esthetics of cruelty totally lacking in the ugly yahooism of the American schlockmeister. In fact, *A MEIA-NOITE...* deserves to join the select company of the great horror classics of the early '60s.

**Other opinions.** 'A nightmarish spook-show transcribed onto celluloid' (Erik Sulev). 'Comparable only to Buñuel' (Salviano Cavalcanti de Paiva, film critic). 'The first rigorously insufferable movie in history' (José Carlos Oliveira, film critic). '[Marins is] the greatest moviemaker in the whole world' (Gláuber Rocha, filmmaker).

## O DIABO DE VILA VELHA (1964)

['The Devil of Vila Velha'] *p* co-dist. Produções Cinematográficas NTM. *d/sc* José Mojica Marins & Ody Fraga. *ph* Eliseu Fernandes. *art d* José Vedovato. *ed* Luiz Elias. *m* José Paulo Moreira. *theme song performed by* Edson Lopes and the Roberto Leme Choir. *sd* Carlos Foscolo & Waldir Bonnas. *makeup* Paulo Lago. *titles* José Vedovato & Mário del Rey. *cam* George Phister. *as cam* Nuvem Branca. *p sup* Alfredo Palácios. *p mgr* Jorge Lemos. *p as* Delso & Celso Teixeira Mendes. *location coord* Laerte Moreira. *script sup* Pena Filho. *gaffer* Edgar Ficks. *as makeup* Dina Sieczko. *sd mix* AIC. *p* Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast* Milton Ribeiro (*The Mercenary*), Roque Rodrigues (*The Devil*), José Mojica Marins (*Fagundes*), Osvaldo de Souza, Gené Carvalho, Salomão Cara, Leda Figueiró, Nelson Laforet, Rubens Urabro, Rosalvo Caçador, José Paulo Moreira, Pia Sieczko, Nelson Teixeira Mendes, Moraes Fernandes, Luiz Antônio, Aparecido Firmino, Mário Sartoris, Nelson Resende, Silvana Marçal, Gilda Néri, Margarete Moreira, Victor M. Sieczko, Domingos Barbosa, Eurípedes da Silva, Eugênio Spigiorim, Ari Maia, Paulo Andrade, Jorge Lemos, Evaldo Barreto. *Eastmancolor*. *rt* 90 min.

**Synopsis.** The village of Vila Velha is ruled by a powerful robber baron nicknamed 'The Devil', who has politicians and gunslingers in his pocket. A contract killer of unknown origin is hired by The Devil to eliminate all his enemies: the mercenary accomplishes his task but, in the end, reveals himself as the son of a landlord previously murdered by The Devil. In a final confrontation, the hired gun is killed by The Devil, who in turn is shot dead by Fagundes, an honest politician (played by Marins). But government soldiers arrive and gun down Fagundes...

**Notes and comments.** A rural action-adventure started and abandoned in mid-production by director Ody Fraga and continued by Marins. It was a vehicle for Milton Ribeiro, the John Wayne of *cangaceiro* flicks, and Marins had there one of his few chances to play a righteous (but doomed) character. This was the first time the filmmaker worked for producer Nelson Teixeira Mendes, who distributed his previous movie and later would offer him many non-horror projects.

## ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER (1966)

['Tonight I'll Be Incarnated in Your Corpse'] *p* co- Ibéria Filmes. *dist* Paranaquá Cinematográfica. *d/sc* José Mojica Marins. *dialog* Aldenora de Sá Porto. *ph* Giorgio Attili. *p des* Luigi Calvano. *art d* José Vedovato. *ed* Luiz Elias. *m* [library]. *sd* Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *sd fr* Salatiel Coelho. *makeup* Alfonso Barros. *titles* Marcello C. Tassara. *p mgr* Antônio Fracari. *script sup* Denise Maria. *prop* Roberto Leme. *grip* Virgílio Roveda. *gaffer* José Dias. *electr* Liberato Pereira & Luis Carlos Costa. *p as* Eduardo Lafon. *as cam* Nuvem Branca. *as art d* Fernando Rosa. *set dec* Ottoniel Chagas. *as set dec* João Santos, Aristides Cremonesi & Raulino Ramos. *as script sup* Marina Brito. *paintings* C. Padilha. *sd mix* Odil FonoBrasil. *prints* Lider. *stills* Elias Litaldi. *p* Augusto Pereira. *cast* José Mojica Marins (*Zé do Caixão*), Nádia Tell [= Nádia Freitas] (*Laura*), Tina Wohlers (*Márcia*), Nivaldo de Lima (*Bruno the Hunchback*), William Morgan [= Wilson Gomes de Araújo] (*Truncador*), Tânia Mendonça (*Jandira*), Roque Rodrigues (*The Colonel*), Mina Monte (*Marina*), Arlete Lobo Brazolin (*Dirce*), Lya Laguette



## ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER (1966)

(*Wilma*), Esmeralda Ruschel (*Victim #1*), Paula Ramos (*Victim #2*), Palito (*The Demon*), José Carvalho (*Father Ramiro*), Sebastião Grandim (*Doctor*), Osvaldo de Souza (*Commissioner Homero*), Paulo Gaeta (*Tattoo*), Nelson Stasionis (*Cadaverous*), Roque Romeu (*Omulu*), Antônio Eracari (*Cláudio, Laura's Brother*), Carmen Marins (*The Colonel's Wife*), Ilidio Martins Simões (*Laura's Fiancé*), Antônio Marins (*Laura's Fiancé's Father*), Graveto (*Jandira's Husband*), Mário Lima (*Biker*), Dário Santos (*Damned Soul in Hell*), Salvador Amaral (*Demon in Hell*), Denise Maria, Marina Brito, Enio Lobo, Sebastiana Dantas, Maria del Carmen, Renato Azevedo, Dina Cristina, Terezinha de Oliveira, Ivair Gomes, Vânia Rangel. *Black & white* (Hell sequence in Eastmancolor). *rt* 110 min. Presented at the III International Convention of Fantasy Cinema, Paris (1973).

**Synopsis.** This movie starts where *A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA* ends... Zé do Caixão survives the shock he suffered and, during his convalescence, the charges against him are dropped for lack of evidence. He returns to his despised country town and continues to spook the locals; now he has a assistant, the hunchback Bruno, and somehow has access to a large laboratory-cum-torture-chamber, apparently in the basement of his own funeral parlor. Still in his quest for the Perfect Woman, Zé has Bruno kidnap six local women known for their disbelief in religion and submits them to an assault by an army of tarantulas: only one captive, Márcia, shows no fear and thus meets his requirements. One of the 'flunkers' is given to the malformed Bruno and accidentally strangled by him; the others, including Jandira, who swears she'll return 'incarnated in [Zé's] corpse', are thrown into a snake pit. Zé tries to have sex with Márcia while watching the other women being finished off by the snakes; when she backs out, unable to stand the sight, he regrets her 'weakness' and dismisses her, trusting she wouldn't denounce him to the authorities as she is still under his spell. In the morning, Laura—daughter of the powerful Colonel—returns from the big city and is immediately fascinated by Zé, who boldly crashes her engagement ball and asks her for a date. Laura accepts and soon gets involved with Zé, who is delighted to realize she is every bit his match in cold ruthlessness and lack of patience for 'weaklings'. Dismayed at her conduct, Laura's brother Cláudio offers to buy all of Zé's properties for twice their value if he would leave town; the undertaker pretends to close the deal, but then he kills Cláudio with a crude head-crushing device and, with Márcia's complicity, has the Colonel's foreman Truncador framed for the crime. To her family's consternation, Laura skips her own brother's funeral to have sex with Zé, and soon moves in with him, preparing to bear his son: the irate Colonel has Truncador out of jail and orders him to get rid of the undertaker at any cost. But Zé is unruffled until

he overhears that Jandira, the woman who put a curse on him, was pregnant when she died. Obsessed with the idea of having cut off 'the continuity' a child would have brought, Zé has a horrible nightmare in which a demon appears to drag him down to Hell. In his mind, Gehenna is an icy place where the damned souls are forever submitted to torture and Satan has Zé's face: there he also sees his victims, including Jandira, who reiterates her curse. Zé wakes up screaming and is reassured by Laura's own disbelief in Heaven or Hell; soon he finds himself a happy man when the town doctor confirms Laura is pregnant. Zé, joyously drunk with the prospect of becoming a father, is ambushed by Truncador's gang of hired goons and almost killed. But his need to survive at least until his child is born renews his energies; he fights back savagely and Truncador and his thugs end up all dead. Meanwhile, feeling rejected, Márcia kills herself; before dying, however, she tells the authorities what she knows of Zé's atrocities. Now with a warrant to arrest the undertaker, the police commissioner and the Colonel organize a posse. Laura dies in labor, and the desolate Zé is further saddened to realize the baby was still-born. Venting his frustration in a furious ramble, Zé is shot by the posse and falls into a marsh, where he still defiantly refuses to believe in the supernatural even as he sinks. But the skeletons of his victims come out, and at last he asks for the Cross—the symbol of the Son—as he is dragged down to the bottom of the swamp. Bruno watches from the woods.

**Notes and comments.** A worthy sequel that expands the Zé do Caixão mythos despite adopting some tired Western horror film chestnuts—deformed assistant, madman laboratory, torture chamber, torch-bearing posse—that somewhat blemish its originality. That expansion is possible mainly because of two reasons. First, it further develops the Inchoate Superior Man theme: if Zé returns stronger and more sadistic than in the previous film (and also mysteriously more well-to-do—he seems no longer to have to work for a living), his self-confidence now falters to such a precarious level that he needs the psychological support of a firm-willed woman(!) to reclaim his own ideas. Second, and more importantly, the film has the audacity of following the progression of Zé's nefarious deeds with a moment of personal epiphany that turns him, for a while, into a hero the audience can support. Cut down to human size, the monster's pathological symptoms are amplified for our better scrutiny of his sick mind.

The script (with juicy, overinflated silly lines that Ed Wood would gladly take credit for) this time includes more characters, but it is still centered on Zé's personal vision of the order of things, particularly in his fixation on the child as the most sacred of all beings. So it is significant that the woman who curses him with the title oath was pregnant when she died, and

it is her husband who finally shoots Zé: all atrocities would be tolerated, except those against infants. (Wouldn't Randall Terry love this man?) Even the Catholicism-vindicating ending, allegedly imposed by Church-pressured censors, fits this notion as Zé explicitly invokes the Cross because it symbolizes 'the Son'. Within this framework, creative felicities abound in many passages. The introduction is as flamboyant and foreboding as that of *A MEIA-NOITE...*: a replay of the final moments of that movie, a rapid-fire montage of shots of the film to come with jarring opening titles scribbled over, and Zé commenting to the audience on the cowering townsfolk, 'The same old people: superstitious, ignorant, inferior... But Truth shall be recognized, even if that requires their eyes to shed tears of blood!'—before Marins's directorial credit settles in. The tarantula assault scene, with neglected nubile women invitingly asleep in a child nursery and being crawled on by dark and furry creepers, is a small catalog of erotic motifs, compounded by a voyeuristic Zé who watches it all through a peephole. The famous color sequence in Hell (which a lesser filmmaker would certainly have made a climax, not a turning-point) is another surrealist's delight, contrasting the wailing cry and the anguished torsos of the damned with the quiet serenity of the falling snow; but even more arresting is the black-and-white segment that starts the nightmare, with dozens of hands sticking out of their graves as the bizarre demon drags Zé head first into a hole—an image that certainly ranks among the most powerful and disturbing ever in the genre. And there is even room for some warped poetry in the exquisite shot of Zé's final rambling seen through his reflection in the gently rippling water.

Marins also cleverly uses the soundtrack for counterpoint and irony, a practice he would carry on for some time. The same tune (*Zequinha de Abreu's* popular classic *Tico Tico no Fubá*) plays in Zé's little music box when he tries to endear a child as well as when he is gloating over his victims' ghastly demise, linking disparate behaviors to the same personality. And in a couple of technically striking sequences the soundtrack serves well the filmmaker's anticlerical irreverence. When Cláudio's solemn funeral is alternated with the lusty coupling of Zé and Laura through deft cross-cutting, a requiem plainchant underscores the entire double-action. The whirling shot that reflects Zé's joy at the news that Laura is pregnant (a triumph for cinematographer Attili, and duly noted by Michael Weldon as comparable to the spinning drunk shot in Scorsese's *MEAN STREETS*) is celebrated with a passage from Handel's *Messiah*—practically making the scene a parody of the Annunciation.

*ESTA NOITE...* got more exposure than its predecessor in the international press: stills of it were published in both *Midi-Minuit Fantastique* and *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, although not enough to grant international distribution. A pity, because if the Zé do Caixão films were better known outside Brazil, Marins could well have influenced the course of horror film history in the '60s.

*Other opinions.* 'Marins tops himself... You never know what sick thing to expect next.' (Michael Weldon). 'A caricature of Dante's *Inferno* brimming with black humor' (Tati Morais, film critic). '[Marins] maintains with brio an atmosphere charged with high dramatic voltage, by skillfully recreating the character of Zé in a well-defined pathological profile: (...) a neurotic, a necromaniac and a fetishist, with infantile sexual obsessions' (Luis Gasca, Spanish comic book and fantasy film authority).

*Note on the title translation.* The movie has been referred to elsewhere as 'Tonight I'll Paint Your Corpse Red' or 'Tonight I Will Make Your Corpse Turn Red' because of a mistranslation of the word *encarnar*. I believe the best form in English is that indicated above, with the verb 'to incarnate' in the passive voice.

### TRILOGIA DE TERROR (1968)

['Trilogy of Terror'] p co-Produtora Nacional de Filmes/Produções Cinematográficas Galaxy/Companhia Cinematográfica Franco-Brasileira. dist-CCFB. (Three horror stories by different directors; only by Marins.) *Pesadelo Macabro* ['Macabre Nightmare'] d/sc José Mojica Marins. ph- Giorgio Attili. set dec- Artes Itamar Decorações. ed- Sylvio Renoldi. m- Audimus, Damiano Cozzella & Rogério Duprat. m performed by The Bells. sd- Júlio Pérez Cavallari. makeup- Maria R. Vasques. wardrobe- Denise Maria. pas- Mário Lima. prop- Jean

Silva. script sup- Roberto Leme. as cam- Pedro C. Tolloni & Virgílio Roveda. electr- Pedro Kopchak & Salvador do Amaral. grip- Antônio Viana. sd mix- Odil FonoBrasil. in rec- Magisom. prints- Lider. p- Antônio P. Galante & Renato Grech. cast- Mário Lima ('Cláudio'), Vany Miller (*Rosana*), Nelson Gaspari, Ingrid Wolt, Walter C. Portella, Kátia Dumont, Francis Mary, Milene Drumond, Maria Norma, Zilda, Ivair de Oliveira, Sebastião Grandim, Paula Ramos. Black & white. rt- 31 min. Other episodes: *O Acordo* ['The Deal', d- Ozuvaldo Candeias] and *Procissão dos Mortos* ['Procession of the Dead', d- Luis Sérgio Person]. total rt- 100 min.

*Synopsis.* Cláudio is haunted by bizarre hallucinations caused by his extreme fear of being buried alive: he imagines being chased by snakes, frogs, lizards and various humanoid freaks. A Macumba consultation is useless, but professional help seems to have some effect. One day he is attacked by a gang of punks and forced to watch his girlfriend being raped: the shock makes him slip into a deep coma. Believed dead, he is buried by his family; but shortly after the funeral, the presence nearby of a woman selling stuffed reptiles reminds some in the retinue of his taphophobia. The mourners rush to dig up the casket—and find out he died trying to escape.

*Notes and comments.* Contrary to what has been stated elsewhere, this film is not based on a radio show. This is Marins's only sketch to date to be successfully incorporated into an anthology that includes episodes by other directors—in this case, names who were at the time far more prestigious than his own among the critic intelligentsia. It is a grim little shocker that suffers from unnecessary padding—which is particularly depressing because the extraneous material involves a sensationalized portrait of Macumba that does a real disservice to legitimate followers of this Afro-Brazilian cult. What looks like documentary footage of an authentic Macumba ritual (a drummer with an unpleasantly deformed hand is prominently shown) is edited into staged scenes showing a priestess charging a fortune for her services and a practitioner whipping bare five scantily-clad women who desperately need money. Besides that flaw, the film's stark imagery of loul beasts and distorted faces in closeup against a black backdrop (this footage would be recycled many times in other features), plus its effective dramatization of the horrors of a premature burial—where soundless shots of the hero screaming inside the coffin are intercut with the noisy, bustling crowd trying to help him out—easily make this the better episode of the trio. So much so that, after preceding the other two sketches when the feature was first released, it was later shifted to the end to make for the closing vignette. One nagging lapse in credibility remains, though. Just what the hell is a stuffed animal vendor doing at the cemetery gate—especially one who yells 'Snakes and lizards of the highest quality!'—is anybody's guess...

### O ESTRANHO MUNDO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO (1966)

['The Strange World of Zé do Caixão'] p co/dist- Ibéria Filmes. d/sstory/song lyrics- José Mojica Marins. sc- Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. ph- Giorgio Attili. artwork- Jayme Cortez. art d- Brutus. ed- Eduardo Llorente. m- [library]. song performed by Edson Lopes & Titulares do Ritmo. sd- Júlio Pérez Cavallari. set dec- Marta. makeup- Darci Silva & Pisaninho. p mgr- Evandro Barreto. p sup- Christo Corcouvelis. pas- Enzo Baroni & Arnaldo Brasil. p secretary- Denise Mana. script suplas ed- Roberto Leme. prop- Jean Silva. as cam- Rosalvo Caçador, Virgílio Roveda & Silvio. as sd- Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. grip- Sandu. gaffer- Pedro Kopchak. electr- Pedro C. Tolloni & Salvador Amaral. carpenters- Dario Santos, Sandu Filho, Antônio F. Ravagnoli & Luis Teixeira dos Santos. sd mix- Odil FonoBrasil. prints- Lider. stills- Fidélis. p- José Mojica Marins & Jorge Michel Serkeis. cast- [Pre-credits introduction]: José Mojica Marins (*Zé do Caixão*). *O Fabricante de Bonecas* ['The Dollmaker'] p- Jayme Cortez (*The Dollmaker*); Vany Miller, Verônica Krimann, Paula Ramos & Esmeralda Ruschel (*The Dollmaker's Daughters*); Luis Sérgio Person, Mário Lima, Rosalvo Caçador & Toni Cardi (*The Hoodlums*); Messias de Melo, Leila de Oliveira, Jeff Ribeiro, Abigail de Barros, Carlos Campos, Nelita Aparecida, Antônio F. Ravagnoli, Marlene Alves, Ademir Silva. *Tara* ['Obsession']: Iris Bruzzi (*The Girl*), Jorge Michel Serkeis (*The Hunchback*), Arnaldo Brasil, Ana Maria, Ponti Santos, Antonia Siqueira, Guilhermina Martins, Wilson dos Santos, Bettyr Dorifer, Luiz Carlos Viana, Rogério de Oliveira, Suzan Sullivan, Valdelirio Batista, Anselmo Alves, Romeu

Rocha, Cristiane Lemei. *Ideologia* ['Theory']: José Mojica Marins (*Professor Oaxiac Odez*), Osvaldo de Souza (*Alfredo*), Nidí Reis (*Dilma*), Nivaldo de Lima (*The Butler*), Salvador do Amaral, Kátia Dumont, Dario Santos, Carla Sotis, Jean Silva, Milene Drumond, Lidia Montenegro, Tocão, Maria Luisa, Aparecida Calixto, France Lore, Tabajara Sales, Nelita Aparecida, Edson Antunes, Geni Franci, João José, Palito, Carlos Farah, Terezinha de Oliveira, Sebastião Grandim. Black & white. rt- 81 min. Presented at the 11th International Convention of Fantasy Cinema, Paris (1973). US video release- THE STRANGE WORLD OF ZÉ DO CAIXÃO (Something Weird Video).

*Synopsis.* Zé do Caixão introduces three stories from his 'Strange World'. *O Fabricante de Bonecas* ['The Dollmaker']: Four hoodlums overhear that an old dollmaker, famous for the lifelike eyes of his creations, is a very rich recluse who lives with his four pretty daughters. The goons break into the man's house and threaten him: as he collapses of a heart attack, they raid his daughters' room. To their surprise, the girls appear to be very accommodating... until the old man reappears with a shotgun. Later, the man fits some brand-new pairs of eyeballs into his dolls' orbits, while four eyetess human heads lie in a cage. (Their bodies were apparently thrown to some unseen beast that roars incessantly all night long, presumably the dollmaker's pet.) *Tara* ['Obsession']: A hunchbacked balloon vendor spies on a pretty girl day and night and dreams of her; one day he collects a pair of shoes she accidentally left behind. He is brokenhearted when she comes out of the church on the day of her wedding; then, suddenly, a jealous woman stabs her to death on the spot. The nuptials turn into a funeral. After the mourners leave, the hunchback enters the crypt and opens the girl's casket. Having ravaged her inanimate body, he delicately returns her lost shoes. (This episode has no spoken dialog.) *Ideologia* ['Theory']: On a TV show, the outrageous Professor Oaxiac Odez insists instinct will always prevail over Reason. After the broadcast, the Professor invites his main debater, journalist Alfredo, to come over for dinner and continue their discussion. Alfredo and his wife Dilma accept, but as soon as they arrive to the Professor's bizarre house they are tied up and forced to watch living tableaux of deranged people torturing each other or eating human flesh. To further press his point, the Professor incarcerates the couple in separate cages and reads them passages from Genesis as they starve. By the sixth day he offers a lavish banquet to Alfredo, while Dilma is left with no food or water. Next day he unleashes the famished woman and pierces her husband's throat with a knife: alter some hesitation, Dilma eagerly drinks Alfredo's blood. Later, the Professor offers to his assistants the roasted bodies of the couple on a plate; as the acolytes jump to devour this treat, the Professor nods to the audience and wishes *bon appétit*.

*Notes and comments.* This anthology establishes the first collaboration of pulp author and screenwriter Rubens F. Lucchetti, a partnership that continues to this day. It also features the 'new' Zé do Caixão, a supernatural storyteller who is 'so powerful he created his own world', as the title song explains. The episodes are of varying quality, but relate to taboos in a way that pushed then-prevalent censorial tolerance to its breaking point: never before was the public submitted to such a barrage of explicit mutilation, necrophilia and cannibalism. The first story is a one-note sick joke whose shock-ending is unfortunately telegraphed very early on, therefore reducing the audience's anticipation to the degree of gore that would be shown on screen (this was in the days when Herschell Gordon Lewis was less than a domestic phenomenon and George Romero hadn't started his career yet); its most potentially promising element is the unseen roaring beast—a jaguar? a pitbull?—that seems to lurk in the dollmaker's backyard. Of note is the generally sleazy atmosphere of the whole episode, which confers a particular air of authenticity to the tacky nightclub where one of the perfect-eyed dolls sits incongruously on the counter. The second tale was a personal experiment Marins undertook, that of shooting a coherent story without a single line of dialog (he would later try a completely silent feature, see below). Perhaps the first explicit rendition of necrophilia in a film for general release, at its best it seems to assimilate some of the transgressive quality of a Buñuel film. The stylization of a couple of scenes—where the woman is framed against a void background, as if idealized by the hunchback's imagination—may have been a result of the very cheapness of the production.

The third sketch, however, is something else altogether. It



is probably the most relentlessly gruesome short horror film ever made in Latin America. In concept and execution, it is a truly Sadean piece: its parade of outrages recalls parts of the Divine Marquis's most intensely gut-wrenching work, *One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* (but without the shit, literally), with Professor Oaxiac Odez as its dispassionate chronicler. The device of presenting self-contained vignettes of debauchery and inhumanity in the form of living tableaux (animated on cue, fading-in spotlights and all) equates the Professor's unwilling guests to us in the audience, voyeurs who paid admission to watch enactments of unspeakable acts. Two of the torture sequences—respectively featuring a man pierced with needles and another who swallows molten lead (and then kisses his wife!)—are particularly disturbing because Marins used real-life fakirs: he shows those circus acts in graphic detail, which probably qualifies this segment as a little mondo flick. More genuinely subversive, however, is the tableau where a man is crucified upside down, his blood drained through a cut on his side, devoured by his fellow cellmates in a grotesque parody of the Catholic Communion. The blasphemy angle is further upped in the closing scene, where the Professor's acolytes—the female attendants wearing a huge cross over their chest—pig out on human remains at the sound of Händel's *Messiah* (again), sitting at the table more or less like the Apostles in Leonardo's *The Last Supper*. Nevertheless, either because of religious pressure or of a last-minute wimp-out, the sadistic original ending of the episode is followed by a tacked-on epilogue with explosion footage and a quote by Ezekiel, underscored by Gounod's plaintive *Ave Maria*—as if the Professor's house of horrors (or is it a 'compound'?) were reduced to cinders by divine retribution. This coda is obviously an alterthought: it comes *after* the sign 'The End' pops up, and one can even hear the needles slipping off the *Ave Maria* track as the pickup arm is quickly removed. All in all, an anthology with guts.

**Other opinions.** 'If [Tara] doesn't send the last bastions of good taste running for the door, then the over-the-top free-for-all that makes up *Ideotopia* will kick them in the face before losing them through the window.' (Erik Sutev). 'Perhaps the best case for Marins's theory of Instinct prevailing over Reason resides in the viewers' disposition: Reason tells them to leave the theater not to watch the atrocities on screen, but Instinct glues them to their seats.' (Luís Gasca).

## RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS (1969)

['Ritual of the Maniacs'] p: OSSADICOS. p co: Multifilmes. dist: Fotocena Filmes-M.M. Ltda. d/m selection: José Mojica Marins. sc: Rubens Francisco Lucchetti & José Mojica Marins. ph: Giorgio Attili. artwork: Nico Rosso. art d: Graveto. ed: Luiz Elias. m: [library]. sd: Romeu Quinto. makeup: Nilcemar Leyart. as d: Marcelo Motta. p mgr: Mário Lima. script sup: Márcio Silva. pas: Luis C. Reis Peláio. prep: Jorson Silva. gaffer: Nenê Harris. ascam: Virgílio Roveda. ased: Hélio. smix: Odil FonoBrasil & E. Szankovsky. prints: Lider. stills: Milagres & William. p: José Mojica Marins, Giorgio Attili & Jorge Michel Serkeis. asoc p (1986 issue): Goffredo Telles Neto. cast: José Mojica Marins (Himself/Zé do Caixão), Sérgio Hingst (Dr. Sérgio), Andréa Bryan (The Salesgirl), Mário Lima (The TV Studio Technician), Ozualdo Candeias (Waldomiro, the Accountant), Lourdes Vanucchi Ribas (The Socialite), Annik Malvil (The Adulteress), Itala Nandi (Maria), Maurice Capovilla, João Callegaro, Carlos Reichenbach, Jairo Ferreira & Waller C. Portella (Discussion Panel); Graveto (The Adulteress's Lover), Jairo Rodrigues, Roney Vanderney, Rosemeire Thiago, Helena Nogueira, Emília Duarte, José Carlos, Palito, Luiz Renato, Paulo Morandi, Ronaldo Beibe, Stela Maris, Maria Cristina, Cláudio Marques, Dante Mina, Jandira Gabriel, Márcio Marcel, Ângelo Assunção. Black & white, with Eastmancolor 'trip' sequences. rt: 91 min. Banned by the censors in 1970, even with many cuts; presented in the 1986 RioCine Film Festival as *O DESPERTAR DA BESTA* ['The Awakening of the Beast']. US video release: THE AWAKENING OF THE BEAST (RITUAL OF THE MANIACS) (Something Weird Video).

**Synopsis.** Psychologist Dr. Sérgio explains to a shocked discussion panel on a TV show that his practice led him to conclude that all perversions known to humankind are found in each of us in various degrees and stimulated by drugs. He tells the panel various episodes of sexual indulgence associated with narcotics, and admits having performed an experiment with human guinea pigs for a book he wrote: he appar-

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RECURRENT CHARACTERS

Ever since the mid-'60s Marins has populated film after film with a number of stock characters with a regular general profile. (So has Fellini, and nobody complained.) Here's an alphabetical guide to those familiar figures who pop up across different genres.



## Á MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA (1963)

•**The Adulteress.** Female adultery is an unpardonable sin that *has* to be punished with the utmost severity. That said, the Adulteress usually is given plenty of screen time to enjoy her wicked ways and have a ball before Marins casts the first stone. Curiously, male adulterers are not regarded as half as reprehensible and can even walk away with minor damage.

•**The Filmmaker.** Always portrayed by Marins as a quiet genius, not formally educated but a serious researcher of the human mind, which he understands at a level much deeper than any qualified psychotherapist. The Filmmaker treats men of science with a 'I'm no expert but I'll be glad to be of some help, doc' attitude, proving the supremacy of intuition over learning. He even played Dr. Ruth for a frigid sodalite, with great success.

•**Gays.** Usually making their presence in the '70s as politically incorrect comic relief. Stereotypically effete, limp-wristed, nagging, obnoxious but harmless—all graduates of the Richard Simmons school of prancing.

•**Gypsies.** They follow the traditional image of being mysterious, tribal and passionate. Female gypsies are sultry and insatiable when young, haggard and wise when old, but gifted fortune-tellers at any age. Gypsy men are thin-skinned and their blood boils at regular intervals, giving them ample opportunity to hone their skills at whiplashing and knife-handling.

•**Journalists.** The most hardworking people in the world, particularly those on the crime beat. Streetwise, helpful, often heroic: never dishonest, even if sometimes obnoxious on TV show panels.

•**Macumba Practitioners.** Despite Marins' professed interest and defense of Macumba, virtually all practitioners of this Afro-Brazilian cult are shown as evil, often incongruously linked to sadism and human sacrifices. They get an undeserved bad rap in the movies, which the filmmaker is trying to compensate with less defamatory portrayals in his stage performances.

•**The Man Haunted by Nightmares.** A man in his twenties about to get married, or recently married,

probably recasting his premarital jitters/sexual inadequacy in the form of frightening dreams. A total wimp whose faithful fiancée/wife deserves better yet stands by him.

•**Priests.** While Marins makes no bones about his anticlerical stance in public, to this date he hasn't yet come up with a film characterization of a priest with all the vices and hypocrisy he sees in the clergy—probably out of fear of censorial backlash from the once all-powerful Catholic Church. Then again, his movie priests are not exactly warm, wholesome or reassuring figures: they are stern, authoritarian and stuffy, more concerned with canonical rules than with reaching out to their parishoners.

•**The Psychotherapist.** A well-intentioned learned man who, for all his science and acquired knowledge, is invariably unable to untangle the mysteries of the unconscious and frequently has to appeal to a higher source—the Filmmaker. Alternately called 'psychologist' or 'psychiatrist' with no apparent distinction between categories.

•**The Reckless Youth** (a collective term). Marins was getting over-the-hill when the Sixties 'happened' in Brazil and totally missed the boat. His garbled portrait of the Reckless Youth includes over-aged flower-children, bikers, beatnik throwbacks, hoodlums, college sophomores and young junkies all under the same general category of 'hippies', who cavort in crowded but less-than-enthusiastic groupings where body paintings seem to be more colorfully aroused than genitals. Of course, they're not conversant in anything remotely close to genuine post-teen slang.

•**The Rich Industrialist.** Behind every great wealth there is always a crime, said Balzac—and Marins co-signs it with conviction. Self-conceited and dishonest, cruel to the women his money buys, in the end the Rich Industrialist ends up paying royally for his ill-gotten profits.

•**The Virgin.** A young, beautiful girl (sometimes even a child), for whom no bright future looms in the horizon: she is game for ugly rapists, proud Lotharios and Satanist human-sacrificers. No need to worry: maidenhood is such a big deal there's a good chance she'll survive unscathed.

enly injected LSD into them to see how they would free themselves of all their inhibitions... Impressed by a previous TV show where filmmaker José Mojica Marins defended his controversial movies, Dr. Sérgio studied the director's character Zé do Caixão and thought the latter could be a focal point for the experiment. Four volunteers from different backgrounds, all with a craving for drugs and eager to try acid—an accountant, a salesgirl, a socialite and a TV studio technician—were brought in by a helpful journalist. The doctor first exposed them to different stimuli: a stage play about sexual roles, a wild party in a nightclub and a showing of *ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADAVER*—then asked which affected them most. They unanimously chose the movie, and the doctor directed their attention to a Zé do Caixão poster while giving them injections: all four took a 'trip' to the garishly colorful Strange World of Zé do Caixão, where they witnessed different things. The misogynous accountant enjoyed the way Zé treated women, 'putting them in their proper place'; the dreamy socialite thought Zé's World was the fulfillment of all her wishes; the artistically-oriented TV technician saw nothing but an esthetic masterpiece in his 'trip'; and the sensitive salesgirl felt harassed and brutalized by the sadistic Zé... His book completed, a triumphant Dr. Sérgio announces to the panel that he didn't use LSD at all, substituting instead distilled water. Having proved that pure suggestion impels people's unbridled instincts to override civilized behavior, Dr. Sérgio thanks Marins for having provided a catalyst with his character, and asks him where he gets ideas for his movies. The filmmaker says there should be mutual cooperation, and shows the doctor the script for his new movie based on the latter's experiments. Then he looks at the camera, smiles and shouts: 'Cut!'

*Notes and comments.* Throughout the history of cinema, critics have been dumbfounded by many a challenging, complex work; this one gives off a big belly laugh at their expense. This is Marins's sardonic answer to his detractors, some of whom are on-screen in the original video footage of the cretinous TV show *Quem Tem Medo da Verdade?* ["Who's Afraid of the Truth?"] that eventually inspired its own structure. He also cunningly puts himself, the artist, in the third person through most of the film—until he takes over center-stage and shifts its perspective to his advantage. In the end he emerges as a genius, 'modestly' standing tall over learned intellectuals by the strength of his vision and ridiculing his mediocre foes.

In this process of poking fun at his most vociferous attackers (caricatured on-screen by friendly critics and fellow filmmakers) Marins starts by building up effrontery and gives them plenty of ammunition with a series of scabrous sketches. He sarcastically punctuates a sex-&-drugs vignette with a Christmas carol, and another one with a silly Carnival song he recorded that year—the ultimate product-placement plugola. With skilled sleigh-of-hand, he deflects attention from his own hidden agenda to the character of the doctor, who seems to dominate the proceedings with the authority his knowledge and social standing commands. Then a demure Marins is introduced on screen, insulted and cross-examined—only to be, at long last, fully vindicated as a major creative force, an inspiration for the keenest of minds. Naturally, the real target of the placebo-effect ruse is the audience, comprising both critics and admirers, who would 'read' Zé do Caixão as they see fit. Marins deliberately makes Zé all things to all people and exempts himself from taking a clear stand—and he literally has the last laugh.

One wishes this amusing joke (a personal opinion: the film has something to offend everybody) had been only a pitstop in the development of the Zé do Caixão saga, necessary to respond to carpers and regroup forces before going up and forward; had it been so, this notion of Zé as a supernatural entity with mystical powers would probably not have overridden the 'original', mortal and skeptical undertaker from then on. But censorial interference and market pressure made Marins forsake Zé for a while—and when the character finally returned, he was recast in that otherworldly mold so as to better serve an exorcism plot and a rehash of the unreleased color footage of this movie.

In the long period it was banned, *RITUAL...* acquired a legendary status among the few who saw it in private showings. Resubmitted to the censors in the mid-'80s, a time of greater tolerance, it was approved with no cuts; it was then presented at a film festival but hasn't had a regular commercial run yet. Seen today, its once-vaunted dream sequences take a backseat to the many diabolical contrivances that ingeniously

point at the ultimate irrelevance of that most futile of endeavors—film criticism.

*Other opinions.* 'My whole concept of 'good cinema' was changed forever [by this movie]. (...) [Zé do Caixão is] not one of those hi-tech Hollywood monsters, but a low-budget Messiah, an infernal prophet, one evil spirit that condensed in a tormented soul all the poverty and diseases of a starving country' (André Barcinski, journalist). 'Samuel Fuller, until now the most off-mainstream of all independent filmmakers in the world, will piss his pants when he sees this A-bomb of a flick. No more of the idiotic, peevish, counterfeit kind of film. This is virile, pagan, shameless cinema. The screen high on junk. It will turn geniuses into grass-grazing beasts. (...) [It] should be shown in asylums, convents, vocational institutions in sport associations, state fairs...' (Carlos Reichenbach, film critic and director, who also appears in the movie).

## SEXO E SANGUE NA TRILHA DO TESOURO (1970)

["Sex and Blood in the Trail of the Treasure"] *p co-* NTM. *dist-* Difibra/Multifilmes. *d-* José Mojica Marins. *sc-* José Mojica Marins & Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. *ph-* Sinésio Silva. *art d-* Big-Boy. *ed-* Roberto Leme. *m-* Giuseppe Mastroianni. *sd-* Oriando Macedo. *sp fx-* Pérez Sánchez. *sd fx-* Cássio Mendes. *as d-* Mimmo Valdi. *p mgr-* José Paulo de Moreira. *p sup-* Alfredo Scarlatti. *script sup-* Elza Santos & Dalva de Oliveira. *as cam-* José Henrique Borges. *as ed-* Manuel Fernandes. *p as-* Antônio de Andrade. *prop-* Darcy Lotacino. *grip-* Flávio Augusto Soares. *gaffer-* Marcelino Frias. *sd mix-* Odil FonoBrasil.

*p-* Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast-* Roque Rodrigues (Ralph), Rosângela Maldonado (Helena), Andréa Bryan (Corina), Frederico Scarlatti (Augusto), José Galan (Ruy), Marlene Caminhoto (Maria), Farias Magalhães (Tomás), Ailton Vaz (Carlos), Antônio João Andrade (Júlio), Alfredo de Almeida (Captain), Djalma Leite (Mário), Eurípedes da Silva (Manager), José Mojica Marins (Guardian of the Treasure). Eastmancolor. *rt-* 83 min.

*Synopsis.* Ralph, an American, organizes an expedition to the Amazonian jungle in search of a lost treasure. He brings along his mistress Helena and soon conflict arises among the men in his party for women and gold. All members of the expedition kill each other and in the end only a girl, Corina, survives. She ultimately gives up the treasure, which remains under the care of a mysterious guardian (played by Marins).

*Notes and comments.* A jungle adventure Marins accepted to make for producer Mendes while waiting for the censors' approval of *RITUAL...* It plays more or less like those Italian jungle adventures of the late '70s, minus the lush scenery or the cannibals. Of interest is the character of the American explorer, a variation on the Rich Industrialist (see sidebar) who is particularly bullying and ruthless—possibly because his fortune is in U.S. dollars.

## FINIS HOMINIS—O FIM DO HOMEM (1971)

["Finis Hominis—the End of Man"] *p co/dist-* Multifilmes. *d-* story—José Mojica Marins. *sc-* Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. *ph-* Giorgio Atili. *art d-* Graveto. *ed-* Roberto Leme. *m-* [library]. *sd-* Sérgio Martins & Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *p mgr-* Mário Lima.



*Sensational publicity shot.*

script *suplas* ed. Nilcemar Leyart. *prop.* Luis Renato. *color consultant*: Benedito de Oliveira. *as cam.* Rosalvo Caçador, Virgílio Roveda & Henrique Borges. *gaffer*: Harrys Dukar. *electr.* Amauri Fonseca. *sd mix*: Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*: Lider. *p*: Marciano Bley Bittencourt. *cast*: José Mojica Marins (*Finis Hominis*), Tereza Sodré (*Madalena*), Roque Rodrigues (*Lázaro*), Rosângela Maldonado (*The Ambitious Woman*), Andréa Bryan (*The Nymphomaniac*), Mário Lima (*The Lover*), Margaret Delta, Talula Marilyn, Carli Clarestadi, Graveto, Lurdes Vanucchi Ribas, Ronaldo Beibe, Célia Soares, José Américo de Camargo, Paulo Moreira, Paulo Nanei, Silvio Francisco, Big Boy, Antoninho, Carlos Reichenbach. *Eastmancolor*. *rt*: 90 min.

**Synopsis** A strange, naked man who calls himself Finis Hominis appears on a beach. Soon a number of country folks start following him everywhere, as the man performs various miracles. He saves a dying child, resurrects a man named Lázaro who died when he was told of the death of his nymphomaniac wife, defends the adulterous Madalena from her neighbors and condemns the hypocrisy and mendacity of a bunch of partying youngsters. In the end, he returns alone to the asylum he escaped from.

**Notes and comments** Marins seems to like this film more than most people who saw it: it only played for a couple of weeks at a downtown theater in São Paulo, to fulfill a protectionist law that establishes a minimum of domestic feature playdates at a given moviehouse. It is a tired morahity play with a main character too transparently identified with Jesus Christ, repeating some of the most popular miracles from the Gospels down to the names of the participants (Mary Magdalene, Lazarus). After having been found naked on the beach, somehow he gets to wear a strange red and yellow costume with a turban; yet despite his bizarre looks, he is not only harmless but also preachy and corny in his pontifications. The idea of a 'parallel' Gospel or a too-soon-to-be-appreciated Second Coming is intriguing; in the hands of Marins one would have expected a more cynical or ironic approach, and the flatly reverential tone of the enterprise comes out as a big disappointment.

## D'GAJÃO MATA PARA SE VINGAR (1971)

["D'gajão Kills for Revenge"] *p* *colofist*: Ibéria Filmes. *d*: José Mojica Marins. *sc/p mgr*: Walter C. Portella. *story*: Dario Souza Santos. *ph*: Edward Freund. *ed*: Fauzi Mansur. *m*: Vidal França & Fernando Lona. *sd*: Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *choreography*: Zofia Jurezyk. *wardrobe*: Nilza de Lima. *script suplas* ed. Nilcemar Leyart. *gaffer*: José Henrique Beiges. *sd mix*: Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*: Lider. *p*: Augusto [Pereira] de Cervantes & Nilza de Lima. *cast*: Walter C. Portella (*D'gajão*), Ana Nilson (*Nadja*), Eddie Smanio, Conioloano Rodrigo, Hamilton Pereira, Eva Soares, Ted Alencar, Arcílio Custódio, Carlos Meira Martins, Dermivat Dinarowsky, Carlos Alberto Dinarowsky, Gracinda Fernandes, Guioniar Katelan, Cármen Marins, José de Oliveira Carvalho, Benedito Minário, Carmen Traicon, Lola Traicon, Alfredo de Souza, José Lacerda, Juan Estebán, Marta Gomes, Pedro Estebán, Ricardo Gomes, Clemente Xavier, Martins Neto, the Ponta Grossa Symphony Orchestra. *Eastmancolor*. *rt*: 99 min.

**Synopsis** In a gypsy camp, D'gajão and Nadja celebrate their wedding. But the foreman of a farmer, in love with his boss's daughter, commands a raid on the camp and massacres the gypsies; he also kidnaps the bride to please the farmer, who has long coveted her. D'gajão, the only survivor, chases down the kidnappers in a merciless mission of vengeance.

**Notes and comments** This adventure is built up like an Italian western and even mimics the name of one of the most famous characters of the latter genre; but setting it in a gypsy community neatly circumvents the problems of having to create a period ambience and American ways and characters. It is reportedly Marins's favorite non-horror film.

## QUANDO OS DEUSES ADORMECERAM (1972)

["When the Gods Fall Asleep"] *p* *co*: NTM. *dist*: Difibra. *d/sc*: José Mojica Marins. *ph*: Edward Freund. *art d*: Graveto. *ed*: Jovita Pereira Dias. *m*: [library]. *theme song*: Kelson Corrêa & Leonardo Maluf. *song performed by* Irineu Gonzaga. *sd*: Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *makeup*: Nilcemar Leyart & Artez Westerley. *p* *sup*: Alfredo Scarlatti. *script sup*: Nilcemar Leyart. *prop*: Luiz Renato. *p as*: Maria Cristina. *as cam*: José Henrique Borges. *gaffers*: Amauri Fonseca & Antônio Alves. *sd mix*: Odil

The slaves brought to Brazil since the late 16th century came mainly from Sudanese and Bantu contingents who assimilated the Yoruba culture of West Africa, where they were sold to Portuguese traders. Despite brutal hardships, the captives were able to keep many of their traditions alive, in some form, in the New World. Those included the Yoruba religion and its rituals, adapted to local circumstances; presumably to avoid persecution and suppression of worship, the Africans identified their deities with the sacred images commonly found in Brazilian churches. Thus, Yoruba's supreme entity Olorum was equated to the Christian God, while other variously ranking deities, the *orixás*, were associated with Catholic saints.

Slavery was finally abolished in 1888 and by that time the new faith had changed into a peculiar form of mediumistic cult with regional differences in details. Two major cult communities were active then—one in Bahia (in the Brazilian northeast), called *Candomblé*, the other in Rio de Janeiro (southeast), with the name *Macumba*. Others would soon flourish in different parts of Brazil: *Xangô* (Pernambuco, northeast), *Nagô* and *Tambor de Mina* (Maranhão, north), *Catimbó*, *Batuque* and *Pajelança* (northeast and mid-north). They all sprung from the Yoruba tradition refashioned with Christian iconography, for the practice of worship and possession rites. (Haitian *Vaudou*—voodoo—and Cuban *Santería* are two other Yoruba derivatives in this hemisphere). It is generally believed that *Candomblé* was the form that remained closest to the

ror movie can do justice. He is a trickster spirit, a figure common in many African mythologies, with a triple essence that is simultaneously divine, human and animal. He has world-shattering powers, a talent for the sleigh-of-hand and a voracious appetite for food and carnal pleasures. Sly and mischievous but not quite evil, he can disrupt and transform realities, and his talent for 'metaphysical slipperiness' (in social anthropologist R.D. Pelton's felicitous words) makes him well-qualified for the role of mediator between the material world and the *orixá* hosts, as prescribed by *Macumba*. To equate him to the Christian Devil is an oversimplification; yet modern Exu plaster icons are often patterned after horned demons, sometimes even painted red and bearing a trident. (Interestingly, in the early days of Umbanda, Exu representations had him as a thin man in a white suit and a straw hat, cane in hand—the stereotypical *malandrad*, a smartass bon-vivant from the Rio underworld.) On the other hand, Pomba-Gira statuettes show her as a slut, a woman with a lewd grin and large, often bare breasts. Those two characters are Marins's favorites: his personal appearances are always accompanied by a retinue of dancers dressed and made up as Exus and Pomba-Giras. (Exu, also spelled Eshu, was featured as a demon in the possession movie *ABBY*—see page 45.)

The faithful also make offerings to their protector *orixás* in the form of a votive package that includes candles, a sacrificed chicken, food (a manioc flour dish) and a bottle of *cachaça* (sugar-cane whiskey)—and is left in glades and at

# WHAT IS MACUMBA?

original African roots.

The urbanization of southeastern Brazil in the 1920s, when the future megalopolis of Rio and São Paulo started to expand dramatically, brought people from diverse ethnicities and social conditions in close contact. A new form of syncretic cult, *Umbanda*, started there at that time as an offshoot of Kardecism—a modality of French Spiritualism (!) popular among the white urban middle-class of Rio—mixed with aspects of Roman Catholicism and Yoruba beliefs. Umbanda slowly absorbed the more traditional Macumba and today is practiced by millions of Brazilians regardless of ethnicity. (The adaptive nature of African traditions goes well with the similarly inclusive and accommodating character of Brazilian society: in Umbanda there is room for everybody—even Buddha makes an appearance as 'the Chinese Father' in some pantheons.) The word 'Macumba', as used today, is an umbrella name for all Afro-Brazilian mediumistic cults: it is liberally applied to Umbanda, *Candomblé* or any of the other modalities, as most people don't know the difference between them.

What Marins calls Macumba is more precisely Umbanda. The basic activity of this cult is the personal consultation the follower comes to ask a *pai-de-santo*, the leader of a worship center called *tenda* ["tent"] or *terreiro* ["yard"]. This consultation, conducted by the *pai-de-santo* himself or by some subordinate medium, usually involves asking divine intercession to get rather mundane favors such as, for instance, money, good health, a coveted woman (or man), protection against slander or bad luck, victory in the soccer field, etc. During the consultation, a helping spirit-guide descends and possesses the medium—who then becomes a *cavaleiro*, or 'mount'—and puts him or her into a trance to relay messages to the believer. (This event is particularly spectacular in large Umbanda sites where dozens of mediums can become possessed simultaneously, in a collective frenzy joined by many a susceptible spectator.) Sacred intercession is made through the particular *orixá* the medium is committed to—all deities can be reached, except supreme god Olorum, who shouldn't be bothered with such petty requests—and in many cases a lesser entity is needed to bridge the gulf between this world and the spiritual plane. This lower spirit is often the impish Exu, or his female counterpart Pomba-Gira.

Exu is a mystical character whose complexity no hor-



Jofre Soares possessed by evil Macumba forces in *EXORCISMO NEGRO* (1974).

crossroads. (This package is what Zé do Caixão desecrates and gloats about just after raping Terezinha in *A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA*.) Evil-oriented magic in Umbanda (called *Quimbanda*) aims to cause harm to one's enemies through sorcery; in a typical *despacho* or personalized curse, instead of using voodoo dolls, the practitioner often sticks pins onto a toad that represents the intended victim. This ritual appears in many of Marins's comic books and TV shows.

Today, Macumba is basically a propitiatory cult that, through protection, favors and problem-solving advice bestowed by the *orixás*, gives its followers instant gratification instead of the vague rewards in the afterlife promised by the predominant religion in Latin America, Catholicism. So it is not surprising that many Brazilians don't find those two systems of belief mutually incompatible and, even if they worship at Catholic churches every Sunday, they wouldn't mind also going to a Macumba consultation for their pressing questions of everyday life. Counting true believers, semi-believers and interested parties, Macumba followers number about twenty-five million, across all ethnicities and social classes. In any event, African folklore and language complemented and enriched the already established Portuguese and native traditions, to help forge a unique national identity in a country where nobody talks about 'multiculturalism' because all those different ways have long merged to form one single, excitingly diversified Brazilian culture.





### A ESTRANHA HOSPEDARIA DOS PRAZERES (1975)

FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *p*-Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast*-José Mojica Marins (*Finis Hominis*), Andréa Bryant (*Esmeralda*), Amires Paranhos (*Asylum Director*), Sabrina Marqueline (*Lucinda*), Walter C. Portella (*Gonçães*), Nivaldo de Lima, Roney Wanderney, Rosalvo Caçador, Alzinete Santana, Martareth Delta, Palito, Nicanor de Oliveira, Lurdes Vanucchi Ribas, Romeu Rocha, Maria Cristina, Guiomar Barbosa, Guiomar Barbosa, Luiza de Moraes, Vic Helena, Roberto Arrovase, Ângelo Assunção, Abel Constância, Kátia, Isabel, Tony Carlos, Ana Maria, Paulo Morandy, Cláudio Alberto, Irene Roberto, Carlos Farah, Luiz Rodrigues, Adão Félix, Antônio de Almeida, Elza Gonzales, Marcelino Moreira, Antônio Carlos, Wanderlino Guimarães, Roberto Ginez, José de Souza, Antônio Rubens, Daniel de Souza, Eurípides da Silva, Guimarães do Berimbau. Eastmancolor. *rt*-82 min. (cut to 72 min. upon release).

**Synopsis.** A sequel to *FINIS HOMINIS—O FIM DO HOMEM*. The gods fall asleep and evil rules the Earth—so once again the odd lunatic who calls himself *Finis Hominis* leaves the asylum, where his presence was being supported by an unknown benefactor. First he appears in a poor district, where he chastises a woman who manipulated the feelings of two men to her advantage. The picture stops and a voice announces the impending unveiling of a shocking scene, so the more sensitive members of the audience could leave the theater. The movie goes on and shows a Macumba ritual where a man devours a live chicken (this sequence was cut by the censors); the cultists then go to a cemetery where they prepare to sacrifice a virgin—when *Finis Hominis* intervenes and turns the crowd against the high priest himself. Later, the madman stops a lethal duel that had interrupted during a gypsy wedding. Having redressed the balance of evil and good forces, *Finis Hominis* returns to the asylum and hands in a check to the director: he himself was the mysterious benefactor.

**Notes and comments.** Like an unwanted child, this sequel should have been drastically dealt with before its birth or conception. The original concept for the *Finis Hominis* character, that of making him the Antichrist, was changed to that of a benign loony for fear of censorial backlash; the poor reception of the first film should have signalled Marins to either abort or

completely revamp the project. What is most sorely lacking is a better development of *Finis Hominis* himself, defining his mission, needs, powers and limitations; as it is, he only appears at the last moment of a perceived 'wicked' act to stop it and preachify. To the audience's exasperation, nothing much goes on; the script is so flimsy (containing only two set-pieces stretched beyond the limits of human fortitude) one gets the impression the film was slapped together with leftovers from its predecessor. The William Castle-style 'break' before a gory scene—preceding another distortion of Macumba, here associated with human sacrifice—is an indication of desperate padding.

### O FRACASSO, DE UM HOMEM EM DUAS NOITES DE NÚPCIAS (1973)

[*"The Failure of a Man in Two Wedding Nights"*] *p*-DUAS NOITES DE NÚPCIAS. *p*-co/dist-NTM. *d*-J. Avelar [= José Mojica Marins]. *sc*-Jorge Michel Serkeis. *ph*-Edward Freund & Guglielmo Lombardi. *art*-d-Graveto & Benedito Lara. *ed*-Nílceimar Leyart. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *as*-d-José Aduato Cardoso. *p*-mgr-Alfredo Scarlati. *as*-cam-Ezio Martins. *pas*-Daniel Peres. *sd*-mix-Odíl FonoBrasil. *prints*-Rex Filme. *p*-Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast*-Jorge Michel Serkeis, Tereza Sodré, Maria Aparecida, José Mojica Marins, Margaret Delta, José Claudino, Benedito Lara, Daniel Peres, Eurípides da Silva, Virginia Maris, Gina Bárbara, Antônio de Almeida, Cidinha, Satã, Valdir Lourenço. Eastmancolor. *rt*-85 min.

**Synopsis.** A man is traumatized by his mother's unbridled life. In his dreams, he is transported to a small town in the American West, where he defeats some gunslingers and becomes a hero. Later he marries a woman in whom he seeks more a mother than a mistress.

**Notes and comments.** An experimental western/sex comedy totally devoid of spoken lines. A few months before its completion, Marins pondered about it: "It is a great joy for me to communicate, to connect directly with the audience. My approach is always direct, never through allusions or puzzles. Images are essential for communication, and I'd love to make a movie with no dialogue, only images." Unfortunately it didn't get much exposure, as it opened discreetly in a double-bill at a

second-rate theater in São Paulo. This was the first of the sex farces Marins signed as 'J. Avelar', although released posteriorly to the next in line.

### A VIRGEM E O MACHÃO (1973)

[*"The Virgin and the Stud"*] *p*-co/dist-NTM. *d*-J. Avelar [= José Mojica Marins]. *sc*-Georgina de Resende. *ph*-Eliseu Fernandes. *ed*-Nílceimar Leyart. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Júlio Pérez Cavallar. *makeup*-Flávio Torres. *gaffer*-Virgílio Roveda. *pas*-Walter C. Portella. *sd*-mix-Odíl FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *p*-Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast*-Lisa Negri (*Maria*), Aurélio Tomasini, Augusto Pereira, Walter C. Portella, Vozmarline, Gracinda Fernandes, Antônio de Almeida, Nadiu Fernandes. Eastmancolor. *rt*-85 min.

**Synopsis.** A man proud of his sexual prowess is challenged by a rival, and the two set out to seduce the only virgin woman in town—the unconquerable icy Maria.

**Notes and comments.** Although the *pornochanchada* genre was dominated by slick productions made in Rio de Janeiro, Marins made of this contribution to the cycle a modest success. Like many other comedies of this kind, the film relies heavily on Brazilian sexist stereotypes: 'ideal' women worth fighting for are necessarily virgins, cheated husbands are to be ridiculed (in one scene, the mustache of a man in a painting points to all cuckolds in the room), gay men are all whining pests, etc.

### EXORCISMO NEGRO (1974)

[*"Black Exorcism"*] *p*-O TIRADOR DE DEMÔNIOS. *p*-co/dist-Cinedistri. *d*-José Mojica Marins. *sc*-Adriano Stuart & José Mojica Marins. *story*-Rubens Francisco Lucchetti & José Mojica Marins. *ph*-Antônio Melande. *art*-d-cos- Campelo Neto. *ed*-Carlos Coimbra. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Roberto Melo Leite & José Tavares. *sd*-mix-Geraldo José. *sd*-ed/mix-Fernando Braun. *makeup*-Flávio Torres. *choreo*-Luiz Karlo. *titles*-Maurício Sanches. *script*-sup-Marcelo Motta. *prop*-Daniel Perez. *p*-mgr-Antônio Martinis C. Filho & José Peres Jr. *as*-d-Adriano Stuart & Nílceimar Leyart. *as*-cam-Jorge Pfister Jr. *pas*-André Klotzel & Fernando Braun. *electr*-José Dias, José Ricci & Wilson da Silva Louzada. *color*-cons-Oswaldo Cruz Kemerli. *grip*-Sylvio Dias. *drivers*-Alfio Reschiani & Bráulio Raimund dos Santos. *sd*-mix-Somil Som & Imagem. *prints*-Revela. *wardrobes*-supplie-Gregório's & Agam. *stills*-José do Amaral & Hércules Barros. *advertising*-José Ferreira & Maurício Kus. *p*-Aníbal Massaini Neto. *cast*-José Mojica Marins (*Himself/Zé do Caixão*), Walter Stuart (*Álvaro*), Jofre Soares (*Júlio*), Geórgia Comide (*Lucia*), Ariane Arantes (*Vilma*), Alcione Mazzeo (*Luciana*), Marcelo Picchi (*Carlos*), Merisol Marins (*Betinha*), Wanda Kosmo (*Malvina*), Adriano Stuart (*Eugênio*). Eastmancolor. *rt*-94 min.

**Synopsis.** During a press conference, filmmaker José Mojica Marins denies his character Zé do Caixão actually exists. Announcing also that exorcism will be the subject of his next project, he leaves for a Christmas vacation at his friend Álvaro's remote country house. Marins arrives there by boat and is cheerfully greeted by Álvaro and his family—elderly father Júlio, wife Lúcia, daughters Vilma and Luciana and little Betinha, all later joined by Vilma's fiancé Carlos. The workaholic filmmaker tries hard to come up with new ideas for a script but suffers a creative block. In the following few days, many bizarre incidents happen in the house: strange noises are heard, old man Júlio gets possessed by some evil entity and babbles 'he' is coming back to 'collect a debt', Betinha's Christmas tree is momentarily decked with snakes and spiders, books fly off the shelf, Carlos is also taken over by an unseen force. Only Lúcia knows the source of these phenomena: years before, she was a barren woman who made a deal with Malvina, a witch who lives in a hut nearby. In exchange for fertility, she promised she would wed her elder daughter with whomever Malvina chooses, and now that Vilma is engaged to Carlos, the witch feels betrayed and is unleashing evil forces against the family. More horrors follow: now Luciana is possessed, the family dog is found dead, and Marins watches Betinha arranging the garden flowers in the shape of a Satanic trident. Carlos suffers a freak accident, and he and Vilma are assisted by a strange young man, Eugênio—who is actually Malvina's son and her choice for Vilma's husband. One night, Marins surprises Vilma naked and obviously seized by demonic powers, masturbating with a wooden pole; he tries to stop her and is hit unconscious. Marins sees himself in a fetish chamber where, amid torture sessions inflicted upon the damned, all members

of Álvaro's family are seen as part of a coven, preparing for the wedding of Vilma and Eugênio. The ceremony is presided by none other than Zé do Caixão, who claims to be Vilma's real father—as much as Eugênio's is Satan himself. Shocked, Marins tries to leave the chamber but decides to fight back when he sees Betinha being prepared to be sacrificed. Holding a makeshift crucifix, Marins protects the little girl and defeats the evil forces. The filmmaker wakes up in his room, and when he stabs a vague shape behind the curtain, Malvina and Eugênio meet their deaths at that same moment. Back to normal, the family celebrates Christmas, and Marins sneaks out of the party to leave. But Betinha's eyes reflect the face of a laughing Zé do Caixão.

**Notes and comments.** Made to order for producer Massaini to cash in on the exorcism craze (it actually opened a month and a half after *THE EXORCIST* started its run in São Paulo), this relatively lavish production is the most atypical and incongruous of all Marins's horror films. Never before had he access to such a professional crew (cinematographer Mehande, art director Campelo Neto, editor Coimbra) and highly recognizable cast (veteran TV comedian Walter Stuart and his son Adriano, model Mazzeo, stage and TV actresses Gomide and Kosmo), nor to such technical resources (elaborate makeup jobs, a fish-eye lens) and a well-mounted promotional campaign. Production values aside, the film is fatally compromised: gone is the barbed edge of his previous works, blunted by the eagerness to entice and please conventional moviegoers who'd otherwise never go see a Brazilian horror flick. The plot is banal and crammed with clichés, the characters uninteresting when not obnoxious (particularly that ever-nagging little girl, played by one of Marins's own daughters), the purportedly outlandish visuals made trivial by the very weight of the high budget.

The film also pushes along a revisionist version of not one but two previously established myths, the personae of both Zé do Caixão and Marins-the-Filmmaker. Though still sadistic as ever, Zé is now in cahoots with the Devil, whose existence he used to deny in the past. Here he enjoys some clout in infernal circles and is equipped with supernatural powers—and even has an offspring to boot, contradicting his own mythos! All this makes Zé a more easily accessible—and therefore much less interesting—boogeyman to the casual viewer. Now, Marins-the-Filmmaker is the mirror opposite of the new Zé, and an equally fictional creation. The celluloid Marins is a good-natured *artiste bourgeois* who enjoys domestic and international recognition, wears a lavender suit, plays chess, is aware of his own celebrity status vis-à-vis his character (this line is quoted verbatim from the dialog: "Look what happened to Conan Doyle. He ended up so much overshadowed by his own character that he decided to get rid of him, killing him in an accident in the Alps. That isn't exactly my case, but I'd like the merits of my work to be credited to me, not to a mere character..."), and—gasp!—a devout Christian who exorcizes Zé do Caixão by repeating, over and over, "I believe in God Almighty, in name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, my only Savior!" Any lingering doubt this movie-made Marins is a complete fabrication is confirmed in the press conference scene, where he explains the most important aspect of the award he got in France is "the conquest of the European market"—a bluster of wishful-thinking if there ever was one. To top it off, Marins-the-Filmmaker's voice is dubbed by someone else, while Zé do Caixão uses that of the real-life Marins to ramble on in his obscure tirades ("The Past is like the Present, and the Present is Like the Past. The Future is also like the Past," etc.).

The customary grab-bag library soundtrack this time includes, besides the inevitable cut from Neal Hefti's classic theme for *DUEL AT DABLO* (a perennial favorite among cheap Hong Kong and Brazilian flicks), a most bizarre choice: the "Black Wedding" sequence is punctuated by some church organ background and Pope Paul VI (or is it John XXIII?) reading from Matthew on the Sermon of the Mountain in *Italian!* (Because of the Christian "exorcism" sequence that follows, this juxtaposition has none of the blasphemously sarcastic tone of the collusion of Händel and cannibalism in *Ó ESTRANHO MUNDO...*) The demonization of Zé do Caixão is further underlined in his climactic fight against goody-two-shoes Marins-the-Filmmaker, made to recall a classic Dracula vs. Van Helsing confrontation: indeed, even the background music there is lifted from *THE SCARS OF DRACULA*!

Memorable line: Zé do Caixão to Marins-the-Filmmaker—"You don't believe in me? Don't you have faith in your own work?"

In many countries, two kinds of business have flourished in urban areas near train stations and bus terminals since the early '30s: prostitution and film distribution. Heavy traffic provided a steady supply of clients for working girls, while the easy access to incoming and outgoing transportation facilitated shipping of movie prints and publicity material. In São Paulo both trades concentrated in a few blocks around two major railroad stations and a currently deactivated bus terminal—an area known as "Boca do Lixo" ["gateway to garbage"] or simply as "Boca" ["mouth"]. (It should not be confused with the celebrated bohemian neighborhood also called Boca in Buenos Aires, Argentina.)

The Boca is also the backbone, the heart and the guts of low-budget filmmaking in São Paulo. Since the demise of the Vera Cruz studios in the '50s, the place has been a hangout for filmmakers active and aspiring, desperately seeking financial support. There are a few established producers who bankroll promising projects, but by and large shoestring-budget productions are financed, one at a time, through a limited partnership system often involving investors that don't know a thing about movies. Projects are often discussed and deals closed with no better guarantee than a handshake in a distributor's office or a verbal agreement in a bar over a couple of beers. Needless to say, rip-off artists are legion in this environment.

didn't submit them to anything as controversial as his infamous auditions of the '60s; however, adds Andrión, "he made us pretend to faint on the street, in the middle of a regular crowd, to see if we would be convincing to the passersby. He also made us pose for pictures in a cemetery, and go to a graveyard in search of wills-o'-the-wisp." Soon she would learn the hard way the reality of the con game that too often passes for low-budget filmmaking: she and her classmates had their shares of the next Marins movie swiped by a crooked producer. But her family befriended Marins and, some five years later, sent the young girl to São Paulo to be a ward and an apprentice under him. The still underage Regina lived like an adoptive daughter at the Marins household, and over time she worked for the filmmaker in many capacities in different media—both on stage and behind the scenes in spook-shows, and as a script supervisor and actress in some of his films. She got work offers from other filmmakers, but Marins "was very protective" and wouldn't allow her to work for people he didn't trust. She is thankful of his guardianship, which allowed her to survive the scam artists of the Boca, "that sordid environment of shocking human degradation." As an example of this low-life direness, she tells the story of an aspiring actress who attended a casting session for one of Marins's hardcore porn movies. This woman was so poor that she was willing to

## BELOW THE BELT: SHOESTRING-BUDGET FILMMAKING IN SÃO PAULO

Marins himself shops around local merchants, small businessmen, even doctors and lawyers, pitching for shares of his next movie. In theory, all profits are to be equitably divided among the shareholders: those with most shares can also be officially credited as producers or associate producers. It often happens, however, that one of the partners eventually buys off most or all the other shares to hold full distribution rights. And Marins is well aware of sleazy financiers who tricked him into surrendering the rights to some of his most lucrative films. On the other hand, he has no respect for "irresponsible" filmmakers who'll exploit producers to pay for wacky and self-aggrandizing projects "of interest to no one else." He claims he always uses up his personal resources first before going around asking for money. "I always put up what's mine first. If I have a car I sell it, if I have furniture I sell it—how many times have I sold my comic book collection? I'm one of the top comic book collectors in the country. I've sold my collection twice and now I'm trying to have it back. I don't think it's right to ask someone to support me before I put up something of my own."

Since he usually can't afford to hire established actors or experienced technicians for his movies, Marins usually casts graduates from his own little drama school. From as early as the late '40s, he and his associates have been teaching eager hopefuls—usually unemployed, lower-middle class immigrants from poorer regions of the country—to work in front or behind the cameras. This school hoppedscotched through different neighborhoods in São Paulo and eventually got a footing at an abandoned synagogue that became Marins's studio. Now it has branches in at least three other Brazilian states. "Basically I still use the same teaching methods I started the school with. After I settled at the synagogue I concentrated on stronger [i.e., horror-oriented] acting skills. I think there is a fine line between horror and the utterly ridiculous. Anyone who learns how to do horror can also do comedy, drama, whatever. So I push [the students] to the limit, and later they can do any kind of work on movies, TV, stage or video." Many of the early graduates eventually came to form a core of professionals that sustained low-budget filmmaking in the Boca for several decades.

Regina Andrión was one of the hopefuls who, as a pre-teen, enrolled in Marins's course in the early '80s, in her native Belo Horizonte. According to her, the course was very demanding and truly educational, and taught its students the ropes on both sides of the camera. Marins



Regina Andrión

work in this porno flick just for food. [Marins] was shocked he told her she didn't have to do [the movie] to eat, that she'd be welcome to stop by and have a meal whenever she wanted. But she also wanted to be a star, and would do anything to get 'up there', so she signed a contract. When payday came, the producer—a scoundrel with no decency at all—reminded her she agreed to work for food and he paid her in full with a couple of luncheon vouchers. This and other ugly occurrences convinced Andrión—and also Marins, as her guardian and mentor—that it would be better for her personal future to leave that low-rent showbiz world for good. She went to college, got a degree in psychology and special education, and now lives with her husband in northern Massachusetts. But she doesn't regret her formative years with Marins, for whom she has nothing but praise. She still refers to him as *mestre*—in this case more a maestro than a master.

## A ESTRANHA HOSPEDARIA DOS PRAZERES (1975)

["The Strange Inn of Pleasures"] *p t* A ESTRANHA HOSPEDARIA. *pro*-Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *dist*-Brasil Internacional Cinematográfica. *d*-Marcelo Motta [& José Mojica Marins, uncredited]. *sc*-Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. *story*/p-José Mojica Marins. *ph*-Giorgio Attili. *art d*-[none]. *ed*-Nilemar Leyart. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Sérgio Martins da Silva. *makeup*-Cleusa Maria. *sp opt fx*-Indrikis Kruskops. *titles*-Laurentiu Antonescu. *script sup*-Ronaldo Rocha. *prop*-Ivo Casimiro da Silva. *p mgr*-Jorge Perez Ortega. *as cam*-José Geraldo. *pas*-Giulio Aurichio & Ayrton Lopes. *gaffer*-Rafael Bastos da Silva. *electr*-Luís António de Oliveira. *locus puller*-Caçador Guerreiro. *sd mix*-Kinosom. *prints*-Lider. *assoc p*-Atfred Cohen. *cast*-José Mojica Marins (*The Inkreper*), Caçador Guerreiro [= Rosalvo Caçador] & Manzeth Baumgarten (*The Unmarried Couple*), David Húngaro (*The Lead Businessman*), Luiza Zaracausca (*The Maid*), José Nivaldo (*The Butler*), Jorge Peres (*The Gigolo*), Giulio Aurichio, Flza Ferreira, Alfredo de Almeida, Eunícley Nunes, Maria Nilza, Virginia Maris, Anadir Bibiana, Ananias Gonçalves, Jutael Pereira, Ayrton Lopes, Oscar Maril, José Horta Barbosa. *Eastmancolor*. *rt*-8t min.

**Synopsis.** In a stormy night, a number of people look for shelter in a roadside inn managed by a strange but genial man in black. The group includes an unmarried couple eager for sex, three businessmen about to close a dirty deal, a suicidal travelling salesman, a bunch of 'hippies' (sic—see sidebar) bent on throwing a wild party, an adulterous woman chased off by her husband, a male prostitute, and other shady characters. All through the night the guests are allowed to indulge in their personal desires before being chastised by the innkeeper—who, as the morning comes, reveals himself as Death.

**Notes and comments.** Marins completed this quickie started and abandoned by his apprentice Marcelo Motta, another morality play strongly reminiscent of Antonio Margheriti's *CONTRONATURA/THE UNNATURALS* (1969). The complete predictability of the story precludes any interest in the mystery angle, so the movie would at least need interesting characters and situations as they prepare to meet their doom. Unfortunately, the inn's guests reflect some of Marins' silliest prejudices, so premarital sex, adultery (by a woman, naturally) and the Recklessness of Youth are put in the same level as homicide and grand larceny—all equally punishable with death. The end product is ponderous, humorless and irritating, with a preachy Grim Reaper who surprises no one when revealing his identity in the exact same fashion as done previously in Freddie Francis's *DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS* (1964). This was the first film made by Marins's own production company, named after his character. The ad campaign for this and his next production benefitted from striking posters designed by Benício, the indisputable king of erotic paperback cover art in the early '70s.

## COMO CONSOLAR VIÚVAS (1976)

["How to Comfort a Widow"] *p cd*/dist- Maspe Filmes. *d*-J. Avelar [= José Mojica Marins]. *sc*-Georgina Marquizeine [= Georgina de Resende]. *ph*-Eliseu Fernandes. *art d*-[none]. *ed*-Nilemar Leyart & Edu. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. *sd mix*-Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *p*-Augusto de Cervantes. *cast*-Vic Barone (*The Actor*), Lorénia Machado, Zélia Diniz & Vosmarline (*The Widows*), João Paulo (*The Father*), Vic Militello, Chaguinha. *Eastmancolor*. *rt*-90 min.

**Synopsis.** After a plane crash, the three daughters of a powerful industrialist suddenly find themselves widowed. An unemployed actor learns of their predicament and concocts a scheme to get rich: with his butler's complicity, he successfully pays nightly visits to the three inconsolable widows, disguised as the ghosts of their respective husbands. That scares off the women's lovers and other suitors—and their fathers even hire a priest to exorcise the 'ghosts', to no avail. But the impostor's free ride on sex and money comes to an abrupt end when one of the husbands, who in fact survived the accident, makes a surprise return.

**Notes and comments.** The last 'J. Avelar' sex farce, moderately successful at the box-office. Marins is proud of having made the exorcist character a caricature of a celebrated paranormalist priest, Father Quevedo. At the time the competition in the *pornochanchada* genre was fierce, with the Rio-made contributions gaining a positive edge in production values, better casts and, uh—relative sophistication. De-

feated in the comedy field, São Paulo producers counterattacked with a barrage of action-adventure quickies, crime and horror thrillers and violent melodramas (including the infamous women-in-prison subcategory) with more raunchy scenes and uncovered female flesh than ever, and that was the new trend for the rest of the decade.

## INFERNO CARNAL (1976)

["Hell of the Flesh"] *p co*-Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *dist*-Brasil Internacional Cinematográfica. *d*/story/p-José Mojica Marins. *sc*-Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. *ph*-Giorgio Attili. *art d*-[none]. *ed*/makeup-Nilemar Leyart. *m*-Solon Curvelo. *sd*-Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. *script sup*-Ronaldo Rocha. *prop*-José Jasmelino. *p mgr*-Giulio Aurichio. *as d*-Marcelo Motta. *as cam*-Luís António de Oliveira. *pas*-José Jasmelino, Francimere & Michel Cohen. *gaffer*-Rafael Bastos da Silva. *electr*-Orlando Gonçalves Soares & José Pedro da Silva. *sd mix*-Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *assoc p*-Atfred Cohen. *cast*-José Mojica Marins (*Dr. Jorge*), Luelly Figueiró (*Raquel*), Helena Ramos (*Virginia*), Osvaldo de Souza (*Oliver*), Lirio Bertelli (*Alberto*), Mauro Russo (*Rodolfo*), Francimere (*Blonde*), Michel Cohen & Jorge Peres (*Doctors*). *Eastmancolor*. *rt*-90 min.

**Synopsis.** While chemist Dr. Jorge is busy developing a supercorrosive acid in his laboratory, his wife Raquel cheats him with the couple's 'best friend' Oliver. Realizing that Jorge's work is so dangerous he already wrote his will benefitting Raquel in the event of a disaster, the lovers plot, returning to the lab, Raquel throws the experimental acid on her husband's face while Oliver sets the place on fire. The scientist is believed dead and the lovers run away with the inheritance money; but their shaky relationship eventually collapses when the woman catches Oliver in bed with someone else. The distraught Raquel is run over by a car and ends up in the hospital, where she receives good care thanks to a mysterious benefactor. Later she is told Oliver was murdered by a hooker and comes to learn that her anonymous protector was Jorge—who, though disfigured by the acid, managed to survive the fire. Grateful, Raquel expresses her wish to return to him, but Jorge refuses her love, ashamed of his own monstrous appearance. Raquel then lets herself be disfigured by the acid so she could be like her husband. The chemist, however, pulls off a mask to reveal his face was not affected by the chemical—and winks away with Virginia, his new girlfriend.

**Notes and comments.** Based on a comic strip Marins published some time before, this is another cautionary tale but with a better-defined EC Comics edge. Much like Freddie Francis's *THE SKULL* (1965), this project is more suited for a sketch in a multi-episode anthology, and the padding sequences here comprise mostly nudity and sex—surefire crowd-pleasers for a good chunk of the ticket-paying audience. In Marins's private cosmos, for the umpteenth time, an adulteress is shown as unjustifiably self-interested and deserving of punishment; the doctor's infidelity, however, is 'justified' as revenge (his girlfriend's feelings be damned), as is his cruel method of healing before destroying. Although it is her lover who schemes the dastardly deed and has her as an accomplice, it is the chemist's wife who carries the heaviest burden because she was unfaithful in the first place: so it is not enough to make her see the error of her ways and repent (which she does)—a second chance must be denied as her penalty *has* to be severe. The casting choices are appropriate as the chemist's wife is played by Luelly Figueiró, a famous starlet of the '60s, who is 'replaced' in the story by the then-reigning queen of São Paulo-made sex flicks, Helena Ramos. As it often happens in Marins's stories, some details crucial for the unravelling of the plot stretch the audience's credulity: so how come this genius chemist keeps such a dangerous acid at the easy reach of any passing visitor? (This is definitely no way to run a lab!)

## AS MULHERES DO SEXO VIOLENTO (1976)

["Women of Violent Sex"] *p t* INSTRUMENTO DA MÁFIA. *pro*-NTM/Ribalta Filmes. *dist*-Difibra. *d*-Francisco Cavalcanti [uncredited; José Mojica Marins, Ozualdo Candeias, Alex Prado & others]. *sc*-Francisco Cavalcanti. *ph*-Henrique Borges. *art d*-[none]. *m*-[library]. *sd*-Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. *sd mix*-Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *p*-Nelson Teixeira Mendes. *cast*-Francisco Cavalcanti (*Carlos*), Lirio Bertelli (*Juarez*), Joana de Oliveira (*Joana*), José Mojica Marins (*The Boss*), Dirce Moraes, Zulmira Pinheiro, Sati. *Eastmancolor*. *rt*-85 min.

**Synopsis.** After her husband Juarez leaves their country home to find work in the city, and unable to support their son Carlos, Joana ends up working as a prostitute. One day she moves in with a young millionaire, Adalberto, who also adopts Carlos; but Adalberto finds another girlfriend and takes the young boy along, away from Joana. Twenty-five years later, Carlos is a playboy who spends all the money given by his stepfather in casinos and whorehouses. His profligacy gets him in deep trouble with a gang of racketeers whose main henchman is none other than Juarez; but father and son fail to recognize each other, and Carlos is forced to help the gang to rob Adalberto's business. The all-powerful crime boss for whom Juarez works, a man who walks disguised as a beggar, sentences Carlos and his girlfriends to death after the latter help the young man escape from his clutches; and a kitting spree starts. Carlos denounces the racket to the police and, finally learning the truth about his father, decides to meet him. While the crime boss massacres his own gang to avoid capture, Carlos confronts Juarez—who, insensitive to his child, is bent on carrying on his orders to kill him. But Joana, fatally wounded after being ran over by Juarez, shoots her husband and saves their son.

**Notes and comments.** A film that was many years in the making, a pet project of star/scenarist Cavalcanti that passed through more directorial hands than it could be accounted for. Marins directed about a third of the film but claims that most of his footage ended up in the final print. The final massacre scene, where the crime boss played by Marins toms-guns his entire gang in a banquet hall, was shot 'dry', with no explosives or gunfire squibs: smoke and blood was used only in closeups later edited into the main footage, and sound effects were added in post-production.

## A MULHER QUE PÔE A POMBA NO AR (1976)

["The Woman Who Makes Doves Fly"] (see comments) *p co*-Produções Rosângela Maldonado. *dist*-Panorama Filmes. *d*-José Mojica Marins. *artistic d/sc/m/p*-Rosângela Maldonado. *ph*-Luís António de Oliveira. *art d*-[none]. *ed*-Nilemar Leyart. *sd*-Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. *sd mix*-Odil FonoBrasil. *prints*-Lider. *cast*-Rosângela Maldonado (*Scientist*), Luandy Maldonado & Marta Volpiani (*Dove Women*), Olney Cazarré (*Husband*), Alfredo Palácios (*Police Inspector*), Ivan Lima (*Gay Man*). *Eastmancolor*. *rt*-80 min.

**Synopsis.** Fed up with men after catching her own husband cheating her, a woman scientist develops a formula that transforms people into flying creatures. She experiments her invention in two girls, turning them into fearsome dove-women who attack and kill adulterous men. But she eventually falls in love with the man investigating the human-bird crimes and lets him destroy the formula to go live with him.

**Notes and comments.** The first of two collaborations (the second one only as an actor) Marins had with actress/producer Rosângela Maldonado. This unfunny science fiction comedy had a catchy double-entendre title (the subtextual meaning is "The Woman Who Keeps Her Pussy Up"), as it was common practice for vaudeville shows and *pornochanchada* flicks; but it didn't make much in terms of box-office, being poorly produced and advertised. What threatened to become a pioneering feminist genre movie soon degenerates into schmalzy cornball that celebrates the status quo, and there is not a trace of Marins's sardonic humor that one would expect from him. The dove costumes are pathetic, with a pair of arm-length wings attached to the dove-women's backs and a bird-head white helmet oddly recalling that of the comic strip hero *Hawkman*. The flying scenes, however, are surprisingly effective, with the addresses apparently hanging from a crane by invisible wires swooping majestically before diving on their purported victims.

## DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL (1977)

["Hallucinations of a Deranged Person [or Mind]"] *p co*-Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *dist*-Central Distribuidora de Filmes. *d*/story-José Mojica Marins. *sc*-Rubens Francisco Lucchetti [not credited on print]. *ph*-Giorgio Attili. *art d*-[none]. *ed*/makeup/wardrobe-Nilemar Leyart. *m*-Beto Strada & Clayber de Souza. *sd*-Orlando Macedo. *as d*-Crounel Marins. *p mgr*-Giulio Aurichio. *script sup*-Anadir Góti. *p as*-Nilton Viana. *prop*-José L. Laurentino & Oscar Maril. *as cam*-Luís António de Oliveira. *color cons*-José



Marins's worst nightmare!  
A rapist gets his just deserts  
from **PERVÊRSÃO** (1978).

Carlos. gaffer- Rafael Bastos. electr- Agnaldo Gonçalves & Matheus Navarro. grip- João Martins & João José da Silva. sd lab- Odil FonoBrasil. prints- Revela. stills- Paulo Roberto Lopes. cast- José Mojica Marins (*Himself/Zé do Caixão*), Magna Miller (*Tânia*), Jorge Peres (*Dr. Hamilton*), Jayme Cortez (*Dr. Adolfo Hansen*), Lirio Bertelli (*Dr. Wagner*), Walter Setembro (*Dr. Fábio*), João da Cruz (*Dr. Franklin*), Anadir Góti (*Norma, the Secretary*), Elza Ferreira (*Maid*), Alexa Brandwira, Natalina Barbosa, Sandoval Félix, Lenira Galdino, José Nivaldo, Lourenço B. Rocha, José Barbosa, Shirley da Conceição, Orival Gonçalves, Maria Helena Zeferino, Vitor Perici, Luzia Zaracausa. Eastmancolor. rt- 86 min. Presented at the XI Festival of Brazilian Film, Brasília (1978). US video release- HALLUCINATIONS OF A DERANGED MIND (Something Weird Video).

**Synopsis.** Psychotherapist Dr. Hamilton is haunted by recurrent nightmares in which his young wife Tânia is taken away by Zé do Caixão. Baffled, Hamilton's colleagues at Dr. Hansen's psychiatric clinic contact filmmaker José Mojica Marins for help; though the latter admits he is no medical expert, his contribution is judged essential as he is the creator of the fiendish character. Marins, an 'investigator of the human mind', has a professional interest in the case, and compares his own screenplays with Hamilton's hallucinations. Under hypnosis, the delusional psychotherapist reveals to be as much obsessed with the 'search for the Perfect Woman' as Zé do Caixão himself; only he had actually found such a woman in Tânia. Furthermore, he believes some Satanic power has brought the fictional Zé do Caixão to life. When Hamilton's mind is about to surrender to the character's world of horrors, Marins snaps him out of his hypnotic state by assuring him Zé doesn't exist; to prove it, he shows the confused man the screenplay of his next project, a parody that makes fun of his own famous character. Marins and the Hansen team go out to celebrate, and the filmmaker suggests Hamilton's own obsession created a fantasy rival for the love of his wife. Suddenly, Marins is taken by a seizure; at the same time Hamilton and Tânia are visited by a suddenly materialized Zé do Caixão. Deemed short of perfection, the couple is condemned to 'extinction' by Zé, and thick blood flows from under their door... Marins recovers: it was a mild stroke caused by his heart condition. A reflection of Zé do Caixão in Marins's drinking glass laughs maniacally...

**Notes and comments.** With this movie Marins starts his questionable M.O. of recycling footage salvaged from his earlier works for nightmare sequences: he calls it a film made of "scraps of my own remains" (a neat pun in Portuguese: *restos de meus próprios restos*). About 60 percent of it is made of clips from, chronologically, *ESTA NOITE...* (with black and white footage tinted, rather effectively, in red), *O ESTRANHO MUNDO...* (ditto), *RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS* and *EXORCISMO NEGRO*. (For the record, contrary to other reports, no shots of *À MEIA-NOITE...* are included.) Dream sequences filmed specially for *DELÍRIOS...* are limited to shots of large panels of human faces and bodies trapped in some sort of primordial mud, and a 'mural' of female torsos and behinds exposed through cutouts in black plastic sheets. By the time *DELÍRIOS...* was released, *RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS* was still banned by the censors, so the footage from that movie was shown as fresh. If nothing else, the montage of scenes from Marins's past hits clearly shows how his classic Hell sequence from *ESTA NOITE...* and the savage torture sessions from *O ESTRANHO MUNDO...* are vastly superior to the big-budget, fish-eyed-lensed shenanigans of *EXORCISMO NEGRO*.

*DELÍRIOS...* is Marins's most self-indulgent movie, where he further stretches the 'award-winning, internationally famous artist' image of himself from *EXORCISMO NEGRO*, to fit into his own idea of celebrity-level sophistication: now Marins-the-Filmmaker lives in a luxurious house with a swimming pool and a research library, drinks scotch (a pricey beverage in Brazil, and a symbol of wealth, as opposed to the widely popular, sugar-cane based *cachaça*) and speaks scholarly in hushed tones. (Marins-the-Filmmaker is again dubbed, this time by a mellifluous, irritatingly snotty *sotto voce*, Zé do Caixão still goes on ranting and raving in Marins's real life, distinctively pitched voice.) He is also shown as a dedicated researcher of the human mind who, though lacking 'any knowledge of medical science or psychiatry', has a thing or two to teach to professional experts in their own field—the fantasy of the moviemaker/artist as sage. As Marins-the-Filmmaker laboriously reviews his own screenplays in search for a clue to the deranged mind of the psychotherapist, who admits that 'psychiatry has a lot to do with the supernatural', one is tempted to switch the plot's priorities—so, instead of the story of a scholar (let's stretch the notion) lost in a world of fictional horrors, there will be the tale of a filmmaker who lives on such

horrors now aspiring to the world of learned knowledge. (So what if Marins confuses psychologists with psychotherapists? At least he didn't try to co-opt a celebrity-anthropobabbler like Joseph Campbell to explain his platitudes.)

**Other opinions.** 'The missing link of the film world.' (Fernando Coni Campos, writer, essayist and filmmaker). 'After seeing this movie, I'm going to sleep on a fakir's bed of spikes: this flick is beyond the beyond.' (Ivan Cardoso, filmmaker).

**Note on the title translation.** The word *anormal* in the title is a noun and not an adjective, and denotes a pervert or a person with a deranged mind. A 'translation' offered somewhere else calls the picture 'Abnormal Delirium', as if there were such a thing as a *normal* delirium. Adding insult to injury, the word 'delirium' is also garbled and misspelt in some references, revealing a dismal knowledge of both Portuguese and English.

## PERVÊRSÃO (1978)

["Perversion"] p 1- O ESTUPRO. p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. dist- Central Distribuição. d/ sc- José Mojica Marins. ph- Giorgio Attili. art d- Maria Aparecida Hernandez. cd/makeup- Nilcemar Leyart. m- Oscar Marcil. sd- Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. script sup- Maria das Neves de Lima. p mgr- Melquiades França Neto. as d- Crounel Marins. ascam- Luís Antônio de Oliveira. pas- José Jasmelino, Francimere & Michel Cohen. gaffer- Rafael Bastos da Silva. sd mix- Odil FonoBrasil. prints- Revela. assoc p- Wilson G. Hernandez & Elza Leonetti do Amaral. cast- José Mojica Marins (*Vittorio Palestrina*), Arlete Moreira (*Verônica*), Elza Leonetti do Amaral (*Lawyer*), Ricardo Petraglia (*Friend*), Maria Prado (*Mother*), Nádia Destro (*Mutilation Victim*), Diva Medrek (*Eye-gouging Victim*), Fábio Villalonga (*Transvestite*), Edward Freund, Wilson G. Hernandez, Aparecida Hernandez, Jayme Cortez, João Paulo, Maria Prado, Mariliz Marins. Eastmancolor. rt- 90 min. Presented at the International Festival of Fantastic and Horror Cinema, Sitges (1978).

**Synopsis.** Millionaire playboy Vittorio Palestrina lives a life of debauchery and treats the women he seduces with shocking brutality. He seduces a poor and naive girl and bites off one of her nipples as he rapes her; shameless, he displays the cut nipple at home as a framed trophy. One day he meets Verônica, a medical student new in town, and is favorably impressed by her beauty and sophistication. After a long courtship during



which he seems to have dropped his cruel bent, Paestrina decides to settle down and asks Verônica in marriage. She accepts, but on the wedding night she reveals to be the sister of the girl he mutilated. She then proceeds to put in practice her medical training and promptly cuts off the offender's penis.

**Notes and comments.** Loosely based on a true story (except for the more extreme details), the murder of a millionaire automobile collector allegedly by the hands of his mistress, this gory melodrama was partially financed by the real-life crime suspect herself, who also landed a part in the film as a lawyer (!). Marins claims he "made this movie as a tribute to women"; and plays his character as a caricature not of the real-life homicide victim, but of a famous Italian magnate who founded an industrial empire in São Paulo. He overlays his regular Rich Industrialist type with the extreme behavior of one of Professor Oaxiac Odez's enslaved subjects, and his performance is obviously a labor of love, gloating over his own depravity and revving up his macho image with undeniable pride. Once again, the thin plot is better suited for an anthology sketch; though centered on the Marins character, it doesn't have the sustaining power of the *Zé do Caixão* scripts, moving sluggishly between the escalation of perverted acts and the shocking coup de grace. The latter, though a little telegraphed, does carry a strong punch into the psyche of Latin American machismo—the threat of the *tagmêntê* made real: man's worst nightmare.

## MUNDO MERCADO DO SEXO—MANCHETE DE JORNAL (1978)

["The World, This Sex Market—Newspaper Headline"] p t. MANCHETE DE JORNAL. p co. Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. dist. Central Distribuição. d/story: José Mojica Marins. sc. Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. ph. Giorgio Atili. art d. [none]. ed/makeup: Nilcemar Leyart. m. Oscar Marcl & José Mojica Marins. sd. Orlando Macedo de Oliveira. script sup. Débora Muniz. prop. Donizeth Nunes. p mgr. Satã. as d. Crounel Marins. as cam. Valdeci & Oscar Marcl. focus puller. Luis Antônio de Oliveira. p as. Túlio & Carlos Sodré. gaffer—Rafael Bastos da Silva. electr. Agnaldo Gonçalves & João José da Silva. s/mix. Odil FonoBrasil. prints: Revela. p. Melquiades França Neto, Crounel Marins, Luis Antônio de Oliveira, Rafael Bastos da Silva, Antônio M. Sobrinho, José Carlos de Freitas, Jorge Perez Ortega, João de Oliveira & Alfredo Palácios. cast: José Mojica Marins (Mauro), Bárbara Prado (Mauro's Wife), David Húngaro (Editor-in-Chief), Satã (Punk), Marli Palauro (Punk's Girlfriend), Jayme Cortez (Bankrupt Industrialist), Maria Prado (Industrialist's Wife), Malu de Souza (Bride), Giulio Aurichio (Beggar), João Martins, Fátima Porto, Débora Muniz, José Santana, Tony Mantovani, Paulo Garcia, Luiz Laurentino, Luzia Zaracausca, Nilton Viana, Cármen Marins, Mariliz Marins. Eastmancolor. rt. 90 min.

**Synopsis.** On Christmas Eve, reporter Mauro is given 24 hours to come up with a front-page news item—or else. He scours the town and just misses all kinds of newsworthy incidents, so he fails to fully realize what is going on anywhere and never gets a proper story. Meanwhile, his wife is in sudden need of money when their small son is ran over by a car; she goes to see Mauro's editor-in-chief for an advance, and gets it in exchange for sexual favors. Tired and empty-handed, Mauro arrives home and finds his wife in bed with his boss; he kills them both and shoots himself. On Christmas Day, all the little stories he failed to write about appear on the front page, and above them his own personal tragedy becomes the top headline.

**Notes and comments.** Produced by a co-operative of shareholders on an equal footing (hence the extensive number of credited producers), this self-defined "social drama" is a tapestry of vignettes—mainly of sexual encounters and crimes—of which the Marins character only watches the beginning and leaves before they fully develop. Although the pretext for the main story is far-fetched—what newspaper editor-in-chief would demand a reporter front-page material in 24 hours?—Marins's admiration for the journalistic class seems genuine. Unfortunately, this well-structured film (one wishes horror anthologies were that organized) didn't find the public it was looking for.

## A QUINTA DIMENSÃO DO SEXO (1983)

["The Fifth Dimension of Sex"] p co. Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. dist. Central Distribuição. d.

José Mojica Marins. sc. Mário Lima. ph. Virgílio Roveda. art d. [none]. ed/makeup: Nilcemar Leyart. m. Oscar Marcl. s/mix. E. Szankovsky. p. José Mojica Marins & Wilson G. I. Fernandes. cast: Márcio Prado & João Francisco (Students), Michelle Bertran (Dying Victim), Roque Palácio (Police Inspector), Maristela Moreno (Rape Victim). Eastmancolor. rt. 100 min.

**Synopsis.** Two chemistry students are ridiculed by their female classmates because of their rumored impotence. Undaunted, they do some research and come up with a formula that turns them into raving sex maniacs who hunt and rape every woman in sight. Counting on their victims' lack of courage to come out and denounce them to the authorities, the two continue their raping spree until one of the women dies as a result of their assault. On the run, the two find out they can only attain sexual satisfaction when they are together, and fall in love with each other. Chased by the cops, the lovers plunge to their death as their car falls over a cliff.

**Notes and comments.** Marins describes this film as "a romantic movie for a gay audience", which, if true, probably refers only to its last few minutes.

## 24 HORAS DE SEXO ARDENTE (1984)

["24 Hours of Blazing Sex"] p co/dist. Fotocena Filmes. d/ additional sc. José Mojica Marins. sc/p. Mário Lima. ph. Virgílio Roveda. art d. [none]. ed. Valmir Dias. m. [library]. s/mix. E. Szankovsky. cast: Antônio Rodi & Sílvia Júnior (The Contestants), Elza Leonetti do Amaral (Mother), Nelson Magalhães (Father), Vânia Bournier (Daughter), Suzana (Sex Partner). Eastmancolor. rt. 85 min.

**Synopsis.** Two young men make a wager on which one is able to have sex with more partners in a 24-hour period. They both pick up dozens of women and send them to a mansion where the contest takes place. In the heat of the continuous orgy, the daughter of the owners of the house freaks out and satisfies herself with a dog, which interrupts the proceedings. The match ends in a draw, and a gay houseguest suggests the contestants go to bed with him to break the tie. It all ends in a big brawl.

**Notes and comments.** The "embarrassing surprise hit" in Marins's career. "I wanted to make a movie to make a laughingstock of porno flicks. Everybody wants to show beautiful women having sex, I chose the ugliest women in the country. I wanted to go overboard, I wrote in a scene where penises and vaginas talk to each other, and also, for the first time ever in Brazil, a sequence where a woman has sex with a dog. I got a German shepherd who—I dunno, I don't think it was really his first time, no way. I talked to the actress, she agreed and the dog ended up being a better lover than many men. Anyway, with all those ugly women and the dog, I thought people would be utterly grossed-out by the porn genre. I myself was unable to have sex for six months after I made the movie!" Regrettably, of all movies Marins directed, this was the one that got most playdates and made the most money, and spawned a host of imitations featuring bestiality.

## 48 HORAS DE SEXO ALUCINANTE (1986)

["48 Hours of Hallucinatory Sex"] p co/dist. Fotocena Filmes. d. José Mojica Marins. sc. Mário Lima. ph. Virgílio Roveda. art d. [none]. ed. Valmir Dias. m. [library]. s/mix. E. Szankovsky. makeup: Darby Daniel. script sup. Cleonice Lima. p. Mário Lima & Nelson Magalhães. cast: Andréa Pucci (The Woman), José Mojica Marins (The Filmmaker), Antônio Rodi, Sílvia Júnior, Nelson Magalhães, Carlos Lombardi, Walter Gabarron, Osvaldo Cirilo, Darby Daniel. Eastmancolor. rt. 90 min.

**Synopsis.** A rich woman in her thirties suffers from frigidity and, much as she tries, she can't overcome it. After watching 24 HORAS DE SEXO ARDENTE, she becomes convinced she could only achieve sexual satisfaction by having sex with a large animal, such as a bull. She hires the director of that movie to shoot her own private fantasies, and asks his crew to find a bull for a scene she wants to play herself. The filmmaker contacts the woman's frustrated boyfriend and suggests he wears a bull costume to seduce her. With the cameras on, the woman puts on a cow disguise and lets herself be mounted by the bull. Only later she realizes the ruse; nonetheless, cured of her frigidity, she rewards the film crew and resumes her relationship.

**Notes and comments.** Made in the wake of 24 HORAS... but without going to the extremes of its predecessor, this hardcore

porn comedy got much free publicity thanks to long interviews Marins gave to newspapers in São Paulo and Rio. Contrary to its predecessor, this film didn't get Marins's input in its script. Underground filmmaker Júlio Bressane praised it highly. Porn star Cirilo's subsequent death of AIDS pretty much sealed the fate of the hardcore sex film industry in Brazil.

## A HORA DO MEDO (1986)

["The Hour of Fear"] p co/dist. Platéia Filmes. d/sc/p. Francisco Cavalcanti. sup d/d add scenes: José Mojica Marins. ph. Salvador do Amaral. art d. [none]. sp. fr. Darcy Silva. ed. Waldir Dias. m sup. Francisco Cavalcanti & Waldir Dias. sd. Eduardo dos Santos. p mgr. José 'Indio' Lopes. script sup. Cleonice Conceição. as cam. Custódio Gomes. gaffer: Jota Alves. electr. Fernandinho, Reinaldo Souza & João J. Pereira. s/mix. E. Szankovsky. prints: Lider. cast: Francisco Cavalcanti (Salvador), Marie Edolande Platz (Mother), Alberto Karlinski (Albert), Ely Silva (Sandra), Fabrício Cavalcanti (Young Albert), Regina Andrión (Open-chest Victim), Darcy Silva (Pimp), Clery Cunha (Greasy Spoon Owner), Jota Alves (Butler), Walder Laurentis, Selma Petronilla, Priscila, Lujansen Silva, Leny Barbalho, Maria Grazia. Eastmancolor. rt. 78 min.

**Synopsis.** Albert, a mentally unbalanced man who lives alone with his domineering Mother, watches his recently employed maid Eliana taking a bath and brutally slaughters her. When he was eleven, he saw his sadistic father torturing Mother during sex and shot him dead; now, unable to dissociate sex (or even simple nudity) from death, he has been killing every woman Mother brings home for his pleasure. His victims are all buried in a makeshift graveyard in their property, where Mother also keeps the skull of her husband. One evening, Mother rescues a prostitute from her pimp and offers her to Albert; after sex, he promptly smothers the girl to death. Later, he strangles Sandra, a woman he genuinely fell in love with, and buries her body at the same time Mother is finishing off a previous, not-quite-dead victim. Meanwhile, Eliana's anxious fiancé Salvador investigates the disappearance of his unfortunate bride-to-be and is hired as a chauffeur at the blood-soaked mansion. His suspicions are confirmed when Mother picks up another hooker for his son, and he intervenes when Albert was about to commit another post-coital murder. In a desperate fight, Salvador stabs Albert in the forehead with a pair of scissors. Mother dispatches the hooker with an ax and, shocked at her son's death, hangs herself.

**Notes and comments.** This dismal sex thriller originally included some hardcore porn scenes that were removed for marketing reasons. The remaining footage didn't add up to a releasable length and Marins was hired to shoot additional sequences. This 13-minute padding material is by far the best thing in this pathetic enterprise, a vanity project by a director who couldn't see, among other things, how badly miscast he himself was as its gruff, over-the-hill hero. The new footage is clumsily inserted and starts suddenly, with no explanation for the two female characters that appear in it. Mother is shown dragging an unconscious naked woman into a grave, while the latter's friend Sandra is being romanced by the crazed Albert. Sandra ends up strangled like the others and when Albert tries to bury her, the half-dead other woman rises from her grave and begs for her life, which momentarily spooks the maniac. But Mother suddenly thrusts her hand into the woman's open chest (whose back has an enormous gash, caused by an ax blow) and squeezes her still-beating heart, knocking her off for good. The brief shot where the victim finally falls dead, her eyes wide open, is more shocking and dramatic than anything else in the entire movie. According to actress Regina Andrión, who played the nameless victim, a script was written for a detailed subplot introducing the two female characters and explaining how Albert truly fell in love with one of them. However, only the brutal conclusion of the subplot was actually shot because they ran out of film stock (!), as Marins had to use film scraps and leftovers for his sequence. Andrión reveals some of Marins's bag of tricks: for instance, "to have me really shivering with goosebumps, he threw a live toad at me—he knew how disgusted I am of toads! It was horrible to have that toad jumping all over my body, and [the toad] even appears in the finished film! The beating heart [insert] was shot with a pig's heart." Marins is well-aware of the potential of his 13-minute footage and plans to buy it back from the producer, in order to develop it into another project. The movie's release title is an obvious cash-in on A HORA DO ESPANTO, the Brazilian title of FRIGHT NIGHT—a surprise hit in South America.

# DR. FRANKLIN NA CLÍNICA DAS TARAS (1986)

["Dr. Franklin in the Kinky Clinic"] p co- Produções Ary Santiago. d- José Mojica Marins. sc/p- Ary Santiago. ph- Virgílio Roveda. art d- [none]. ed- Walter Wanny. m- [library]. sd mix- E. Szankovsky. script sup- Regina Andrión. cast- Ary Santiago (Dr. Franklin), Débora Muniz, Goretti, Mikoto, Daliléia Ayala. Eastmancolor. rt- 90 min.

**Synopsis.** Dr. Franklin, a dangerous quack, escapes when his fraudulent credentials are exposed and ends up in Brasília, the nation's capital, where he opens a sex clinic for impotent politicians and celebrities. He gives them a drug that increases their sexual drive and soon his clinic is the site of wild orgies.

**Notes and comments.** This was Marins's third and final hardcore porn movie, a semi-comedy with classic ribald situations involving nurses and playing-doctor. It was part of a two-picture deal with producer/star Santiago and was shot back-to-back with the following title, sharing the same crew and cast (except for the specialized porn performers).

# AS DUAS FACES DE UM PSICOPATA (1986)

["The Two Faces of a Psycho"] p co- Produções Ary Santiago. d- José Mojica Marins. sc/p- Ary Santiago. ph- Virgílio Roveda. art d- [none]. ed- Walter Wanny. m- [library]. sd mix- E. Szankovsky. script sup- Regina Andrión. cast- Ary Santiago (Mystic), Débora Muniz, Goretti, Daliléia Ayala, Regina Andrión. Eastmancolor. rt- 90 min.

**Synopsis.** An Oriental mystic enjoys fame and respect for his charitable donations to mental institutions. Shocked at the conditions of some of those clinics, his mind flips and he becomes schizophrenic; his kind personality is undermined by a vicious counterpart who turns him into a murderous maniac. After many crimes, the man's evil self tries to kill his fiancée; his good half intervenes and fights its counterpart. The good self prevails, but at the expense of the man's life.

**Notes and comments.** A Jekyll-& Hyde story shot on a tight schedule, simultaneously with the previous title. Both movies made use of the same locations, although hardcore porn scenes were confined to DR. FRANKLIN.... Producer/star Ary Santiago wore the exact same makeup for both films—a man with half a beard covering only one side of his face.

# CHAPEUZINHO VERMELHO (1986)

["Little Red Ridinghood"] p co- União Brasileira de Cinema. d/p- Wilson Rodrigues. sup d- José Mojica Marins. sc- Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. ph- Henrique Borges. ed- Walter Wanny. m/songs- Tarcísio José. sd mix- E. Szankovsky. cast- Regiane Cohen (Little Red Ridinghood), João Gabriel (Big Bad Wolf), Luzineth Xavier (Granny), Eliane Amorim (Mrs. Rabbit), Carlos Zimmerman (Cousin Wolf), Toni Torricelli (Woodsmen), Julieta Peres (Mother), David Karmaluk (Father), Rosemar & Nilcemar Marins (Little Red Ridinghood's Friends). Eastmancolor. rt- 80 min.

**Synopsis.** The traditional child story, via Perrault and the Brothers Grimm.

**Notes and comments.** Marins was hired to give instructions to the inexperienced Rodrigues for this kiddie picture. It wasn't, however, a happy experience, for Rodrigues didn't heed to Marins's suggestions and the results were reportedly poor. The movie was released on a kiddie video label as the first episode in the series *No Mundo da Carochinha* ["Fairy Tale World"]. Rodrigues went on to make O GATO DE BOTAS EXTRATERRESTRE ["The Extraterrestrial Puss 'n Boots", 1990], a more expensive production where Marins appeared as a benign E.T. who looked suspiciously like Zé do Caixão.

# A SEITA DOS ESPÍRITOS MALDITOS (1992)

["The Cult of the Damned Souls"] p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. d/story- José Mojica Marins. sc- José Mojica Marins & Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. ph- Claudivan. art d- José Mojica Marins & Nilcemar Leyart. ed- Ideal Filmes. m- [library]. sd mix- E. Szankovsky. video-to-film transfer. Amplavisão. cast- José Mojica Marins (Zé do Caixão), Gaúcho, Adriana Ribeiro, Luana Braga, Valdenice, Antônio Gabriel, Nilcemar Marins, Mariângela de Castro. Eastmancolor, shot on videotape and transferred to film. rt- 90 min. (approximate)

**Synopsis.** Zé do Caixão introduces the story of the Cult of the Damned Souls. A millionaire who owes his fortune to occult forces botches a human sacrifice and dies. All members of his family agree to spend a night at the man's eerie mansion in order to get their share of the inheritance; they don't know, however, that the deceased made plans to return to life by having the blood of his entire family shed ritually, in reparation for his ill-performed sacrifice. After a long night of carnage, the only survivor is a woman who married into the family and thus didn't share the same blood.

**Notes and comments.** Originally shot on video as a prospective pilot for a TV series (which would involve other stories of members of the title Cult), this production introduces a whole cast of new faces and a tyro crew, all recent graduates from Marins's school. The filmmaker decided recently to release it theatrically after a video-to-film transfer and additional editing, but a legal dispute involving three cast members has delayed its completion.

# ALUCINAÇÃO MACABRA (1993)

["Macabre Hallucination"] p co- Associação Cultural e Beneficente Zé do Caixão. d/story- José Mojica Marins. sc/p- José Mojica Marins & Ednei Graciano do Nascimento. ph- Luis Antônio de Oliveira & [posthumously] Giorgio Attili. art d- [none]. ed/makeup- Nilcemar Leyart. m- [library]. sd mix- E. Szankovsky. prints- Revela. cast- José Mojica Marins (Himself/Zé do Caixão), Maria Genilda, Mariângela de Castro, Janete Raspe, Ednei Graciano do Nascimento, Ednéia Araújo, Nilcemar Marins, Jeney Cordeiro, Thaynan Góes, Elias San, Delcídio da Luz. Eastmancolor. rt- 90 min.

**Synopsis.** Filmmaker José Mojica Marins tells the audience how four of his pet projects were withheld, aborted or suspended, and shows footage of his own eye surgery. Meanwhile, a group of people who were at one time associated with a Marins project trade short horror stories that are re-enacted on screen. Those are parts of Marins's own hallucinations, as are dreams of the collapse of President Collor's administration—which caused considerable financial damage to the filmmaker—and a final apotheosis where Zé do Caixão leads a samba group on the streets in a Carnival parade.

**Notes and comments.** A sort of sequel to the yet-to-be-finished DEMÔNIOS E MARAVILHAS, again including scenes shot for other movies, plus some recent documentary footage of this year's Carnival street party. The production, the first screen collaboration of Marins's ophthalmologist Ednei Graciano do Nascimento, was credited to a "Zé do Caixão Cultural and Beneficent Association"—probably a tax-sheltering front presented as a nonprofit organization. Expected to open in August 1993.

# WORKS IN PROGRESS

The feature-length films below remain to be completed but are in Marins's "active" file, and expected to be readied for release in the near future.

# A PRAGA (1980 — principal production completed)

["The Curse"] p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. d/story/p- José Mojica Marins. sc- Rubens Francisco Lucchetti. ph- Giuseppe Romero. art d- [none]. makeup- Nilcemar Leyart. cast- Sílvia Gless (Wife), Wanda Kosmo (Witch). Black & white.

**Synopsis.** "It is the story of a skeptic man, who doesn't believe in our superstitions and all that. By sheer curiosity, he pays a visit to a witch who has her ways with Macumba. He makes lun of her and she curses him with a disease that will consume him, and he'll end up all alone. One day a small wound that baffles the doctors appears in his belly. He realizes the wound has to be fed [sic] with meat. His wife brings him meat and the injury absorbs it. He goes to see the witch, but she is dead. The wound demands more and more meat and one day, when the butcher's shop is closed, its hunger is so severe that it gobbles up the man's wife. Now totally alone, without anyone who'll buy meat for him, he dies. The cops arrive and find two skeletons. We have a great scene where the guy swallows the woman through his stomach."

**Notes and comments.** Based on one of his comic strips and also previously adapted on one of his TV shows, the film awaits final editing and dubbing. The fact it was shot in black and

white may be an hurdle for a theatrical release.

# DEMÔNIOS E MARAVILHAS (1986 — principal production completed)

["Of Demons and Wonders"] early t- O DIABÓLICO REINO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO. p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. d/p/sc- José Mojica Marins. ph- Luis Antônio de Oliveira & Giorgio Attili. ed/m/makeup- Nilcemar Leyart. sd- E. Szankovsky. sd lab- Odil FonoBrasil. cast- José Mojica Marins (Himself/Zé do Caixão), Nilcemar Leyart (Nilce), Satã (Bodyguard), Lirio Bertelli & Walter Setembro (Friends), Cármen Marins (Mother), Elza Barbosa (Employee), Regina Andrión (Girl), Silvio Santos, Pelé, Joffre Soares, Elza Leonetti do Amaral, Arlete Moreira (Themselves). Black & white and Eastmancolor. To be released as ZÉ DO CAIXÃO—O ANDARILHO DO CÉU ["Zé do Caixão—The Wanderer in the Sky"].

**Synopsis and comments.** An "autobiographical reverie with horror scenes", where Marins shows his family and associates and "Zé do Caixão reviews his own life as the Third Millennium approaches." It incorporates, among other segments, the untitled footage shot in Spain in 1978. Currently, about 50 minutes of the film stand completed; Marins plans to add new scenes or, alternatively, splice in his *Pesadelo Macabro* episode from TRILOGIA DO TERROR and/or the sequence he shot for A HORA DO MEDO.

# O OLHO DO PORTAL DO INFERNO (1990 — work in progress)

["The Eye in the Gates of Hell"] d/sc- José Mojica Marins. p- Ednei Graciano do Nascimento. cast- José Mojica Marins (Zé do Caixão).

**Synopsis and comments.** A sequel to the yet-to-be made third Zé do Caixão movie. Zé is found on the road, almost dead, and picked up by a doctor who takes him to his house to be treated. Zé starts influencing the doctor's family and takes a fancy on his pregnant wife Simone as another prospective Perfect Woman. Meanwhile, the doctor is performing an eye surgery on a patient. "The doctor thinks that if he concentrated his mind during the surgery, he could get inside the patient's eye. Simone is an ambitious woman who wants to be a senator, and Zé can give her all it takes to get there, but first he has to get rid of the fifth-wheel husband. So Zé somehow manages to switch places with the surgery patient and, when the doctor concentrates, he ends up trapped inside Zé's eye. [Eventually] Simone gives birth and the doctor sees his own child from inside Zé's eye..."

# PROFESSIONAL SHORT FILMS

Those shorts were made to benefit from a law that guaranteed them playdates as programmers.

# Homem vs. Máquina: a Luta do Século no Planeta dos Botões (1981)

["Man vs. Machine: the Battle of the Century in the Planet of the Buttons"] p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. d/ sc/p- José Mojica Marins. ph- Luis Antônio de Oliveira. Eastmancolor. rt- 8 min.

"It is about Man turning into machine. I stood with my camera on the Viaduto do Chá, attached a telephoto lens on it and started shooting candid footage of people walking and talking to themselves, gesturing wildly and pushing buttons. A guy walks to the nearest elevator and pushes the call button, another one comes by and feels he has to push it himself, and then a third fellow must do the same thing. You flag a bus, it stops, another person insists on flagging anyway—you get the idea. Everybody gets hostile, everybody freaks out and one day someone pushes the wrong button: the planet blows up and we all go back to the caves, to fight each other for a teeny bit of meat. [This short] was quite well received by the audience."

# A Imigrante (1981)

["The Immigrant Woman"] p co- Produções Cinematográficas Zé do Caixão. d/sc/p- José Mojica Marins. ph- Luis Antônio de Oliveira. cast- Fátima Porto, Nilcemar Marins. Eastmancolor. rt- 8 min.

"A woman foreign to this country falls in love with a very strange man, a bizarre man who also has the right to love like anybody else. This was my homage to immigrant women, and



perhaps also to myself as not your ordinary person."

#### **Brincadeira Fatal (1981)**

["Fatal Play"] *p co-* Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *d/sc/p-* José Mojica Marins. *ph-* Luís Antônio de Oliveira. *cast-* Artur Auler, Débora Muniz. Eastmancolor. *rt-* 8 min.

"Two kids try to scare each other. One of them puts on a monster mask and frightens his friend so much [the latter] picks up a knife and ends up stabbing him."

#### **Justiça, Justiça (1981)**

["Justice, Justice"] *p co-* Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *d/sc/p-* José Mojica Marins. *ph-* Luís Antônio de Oliveira. *cast-* Carmen Marins, Antônio Feo-Nascimento, Tarzan, Débora Muniz. Eastmancolor. *rt-* 8 min.

"It was about a scam we had to deal with here at the Boca. A guy shows up at the office of a filmmaker who is about to leave on a trip, gets a job there as a caretaker and takes over the office during the owner's absence. The filmmaker eventually is told about the situation and sues the con man, whose lawyer friends insist the court hearing be held immediately. The filmmaker is far away, he can't make it back in time for the hearing and loses his case [for absenteeism or contempt of the court] and his own office. This scam was played a couple of times here and ruined many film directors and producers."

#### **É Proibido Caçar Produtores de Cinema: Espécie em Extinção (1981)**

["Film Producer Hunting Not Allowed: Endangered Species"] *p co-* Produções Cinematográficas Zê do Caixão. *d/sc/p-* José Mojica Marins. *ph-* Luís Antônio de Oliveira. *cast-* Cléber de Holanda, Débora Muniz, Sandro, Tarzan, Nivaldo Vasconcelos. Eastmancolor. *rt-* 10 min.

"It is about some irresponsible film directors who exploit the few producers we have left to finance their self-serving projects and eventually ruin their supporters. [As a director] I never do this kind of thing; I always spend my money first before going to an outside producer."

#### **STUDIO-TAPED SERIES FOR TELEVISION**

**Além, Muito Além do Além** (TV Bandeirantes, 1968; black & white)

**O Estranho Mundo de Zê do Caixão** (TV Record, 1969; black & white)

**Um Show do Outro Mundo** (TV Record, 1981; color)

Those three shows had the same basic premise, with Zê do Caixão introducing half-hour long horror stories shot on videotape, much like a daily soap. A good portion of the scripts were based on Marins's comic strips.

#### **INDEPENDENT TV SERIES**

Those series are currently in production.

#### **A Terceira Força (1993)**

["The Third Power"] *p co-* MGE/Play Video. *d/lighting-* José Mojica Marins. *sc-* José Mojica Marins & Márcio Espinosa. *video cam-* João R. *makeup-* Jenecy Cordeiro. *script sup-* Adriana Ortiz. *p-* Antônio Carlos. *cast-* José Mojica Marins, Elias San, Rose Franco, Nelson Magalhães, Janaina C. Barros, Delcídio da Luz, Nilcimar Marins. 20 hour-long episodes in color.

*Premise.* Powers halfway between Good and Evil, who didn't choose either God or the Devil at creation, find a temporal passage and land in present-day Earth. They possess the bodies of people who are social outcasts and form legions all over the world, with the final goal of leading humankind back to its own origins, at the edge of the universe.

#### **Cavaleiros do Armageddon: A Chave do Desconhecido (1993)**

["Riders of Armageddon: The Key to the Unknown"] *p co-* MGE. *d-* José Mojica Marins. *sc-* José Mojica Marins, Nilcimar Marins & Márcio Espinosa. *video cam-* César Paulo. *lighting/p-* Márcio Espinosa. *makeup-* Jenecy Cordeiro. *script sup-* Janaina C. Barros. *cast-* José Mojica Marins, Adriana Ortiz, Maraisa Cristina, João Gomes, Pedro Lopes, Rita Cabral, Francisco Santos. 20 hour-long episodes in color.

*Premise.* Evil forces try all sorts of ways to grab the Key of Armageddon and rule the Earth. The Guardian of the Key is a young ESP-endowed woman who has been targeted by cult followers and evildoers all her life. The continuing episodes tell her story up to Judgment Day, when her identity is finally revealed.

#### **PLANNED AND UNFINISHED PROJECTS**

"I have more than 200 ideas for movies..."

#### **SENTENÇA DE DEUS ["God's Sentence"] (1953 — written; abandoned)**

The tragic fates of eight characters, 'based on true stories'. Filming started in 1953, production was interrupted by the death of various actors. Some footage was cut and shown in a portable moviola at a sidewalk show, along with the sale of a novel based on the screenplay.

#### **O AUGO DO DESESPERO ["The Pits of Despair"] (1954-1955 — written; abandoned)**

Four mountain climbers—three men and a woman—arrive to a summit and reflect on their lives as they prepare their descent. Production was halted by a storm that destroyed all equipment while shooting in exteriors.

#### **INFERNO CARNAL ["Hell of the Flesh"] (1962 — written; never produced)**

"A movie about JDs and the rock'n'roll generation." It had nothing to do with his 1976 film of the same title.

#### **GERAÇÃO MALDITA ["Doomed Generation"] (1962 — written; never produced)**

Apparently a professional remake of one of his 16mm amateur movies (see above), focusing on juvenile delinquency. Production was suspended in order to start *A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA*.



**PRODUÇÕES  
CINEMATOGÁFICAS  
ZÉ DO CAIXÃO  
APRESENTA**

**UM FILME DE  
JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS  
(ZÉ DO CAIXÃO)**

# **“DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL”**

PELA PRIMEIRA VEZ NO BRASIL FOI USADO O PROCESSO AUDIO-PARA-VISUAL

MAGNA MILLER  
VALTER SETEMBRO

JORGE PEREZ  
ELZA FERREIRA

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Distribuição: CENTRAL DE DIST. OE FILMES  
CINEMAT. LTDA.





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# a Estranha Hospedaria dos Prazeres



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fotografia · GIORGIO ATTILI

direção

Marcelo Motta

A ENCARNAÇÃO DO DEMÔNIO, OU ZÉ DO CAIXÃO NO PURGATÓRIO ["The Devil Incarnate, or Zé do Caixão in Purgatory"] (1965 — planned; not yet produced)

"[Zé do Caixão] keeps looking for the Perfect Woman, and finally finds her. But she is seduced by Zé's hunchback sidekick Bruno, and she ends up giving birth to a deformed baby. Bruno is still faithful to his master and accepts to let himself be castrated, then murdered by Zé. The woman and the freak baby also die. Zé carries on his researches on the supernatural, takes LSD and, in his delirium, he is chased by the ghosts of Bruno, the woman and their deformed child. Zé flushes himself down a toilet(!) and reappears in Purgatory: here the movie turns into color. A bearded man who resembles Jesus Christ takes Zé to a yellow sea: they are in fact inside a huge human bladder. Then, through the urinary canal, they arrive to the testicles [this is Marins's notion of human anatomy], where Christ takes out his mask and shows his horns: this is Purgatory, between God and the Devil. Later, through sexual intercourse, Zé passes to a female womb where he witnesses the wedding of the King and the Queen—the beginning of life..."

O LAMENTO DOS ESPÍRITOS ERRANTES, OU ZÉ DO CAIXÃO NO LIMBO ["The Wailing of the Wandering Souls, or Zé do Caixão in Limbo"] (1965 — not yet produced)

"Zé do Caixão finally becomes a father—but instead of his long awaited son, he gets a daughter."

O SEPULCRO DO DIABO, OU ZÉ DO CAIXÃO NO PARAÍSO ["The Devil's Tomb, or Zé do Caixão in Paradise"] (1965 — not yet produced)

"Zé do Caixão, who wanted a son who'd change the world, now decides to change the world for the sake of his daughter. But she grows up and rebels against her father."

ALGUÉM DEVE MORRER ESTA NOITE ["Someone Must Die Tonight"] (1965 — not yet produced)

"The end of the Zé do Caixão saga. At long last he gets the perfect son, but the boy is completely opposed to Zé's notions of him and ends up being his father's final executioner."

POSSUÍDA POR SATÂ ["Possessed by Satan"] (1969 — not produced in its original form)

"A woman is possessed by the Devil for a promise her mother didn't keep to a witch." This seems to be the original concept for the movie that ended up made as EXORCISMO NEGRO, and was sketched long before the exorcism craze of the mid-'70s.

SETE VENTRES PARA O DEMÔNIO ["Seven Wombs for the Devil"] (1969 — planned; never produced)

"A follow-up to the last episode of O ESTRANHO MUNDO..., with Professor Oaxiac Odez involved in more sadistic experiments."

O DIA, A HORA E AS ARMAS ["The Day, the Hour and the Weapons"] (1969 — planned; never produced)

"A crime thriller that never went past the pre-production phase."

OS OLHOS ["The Eyes"] (1971 — planned; never produced)

"A man who wants to communicate with the underworld steals the eyes of dozens of corpses and attaches them to a particular cadaver, over [the latter's] entire body. Then he successfully uses this 'eye-man' to contact the Beyond." At one time under consideration as a TV episode.

OS SAPOS ["The Toads"] (1973 — written; never produced)

"A small town is entirely supported by an industry processing frog legs for posh restaurants in big cities. One day, the plant owner finds a giant toad in his frog pond—a toad with strange powers, who leads the frog colony in an attack against the factory. Soon the frogs and toads in the area join the revolt and overrun the town. One of the scenes I have in mind is a helicopter shot of an immense green mass hopping on cue toward civilization."

O DEVORADOR DE OLHOS ["The Eye-Gorging"] (1973 — written; never produced)

"A man is afflicted by a strange African disease and needs women's eyes to make a serum to cure him."

O COMBOIO DA MORTE ["Convoy of Death"] (1979 — written, never produced)

"A story about a ghost train that was to be filmed in three different versions, by different directors: Gláuber Rocha, Lima Barreto and myself." The death of the two other filmmakers deep-sixed the production.

A IRMÃ DO DEMÔNIO ["The Devil's Sister"] (1987 — partially shot by Francisco Cavalcanti; current status unknown)

A purported sequel to A HORA DO MEDO, left unfinished; Marins plays a character who throws beams through his fingernails. Director Cavalcanti wants Marins to shoot some 20 additional minutes to make it releaseable.

ENCARNAÇÕES DE LÚCIFER ["Lucifer's Incarnations"] (1988 — script unfinished; production suspended)

A rewrite of his original script for the third chapter in the Zé do Caixão saga, A ENCARNAÇÃO DO DEMÔNIO. This version was abandoned after the death of producer Augusto Pereira de Cervantes.

CABEÇAS TROCADAS ["Switched Heads"] (1988 — unfinished; production status unknown)

Marins directed one scene for director Clery Cunha's thriller about a contract killer who shoots the wrong man.

NOITES DE TERROR NO PLAYCENTER ["Evenings of Horror at the PlayCenter"] (1989 — unfinished; production temporarily suspended)

A deranged killer is loose in the PlayCenter amusement park during one of Marins's Noites de Terror performances. Zé do Caixão appears at the end as a character in a stage show. Because of a financial dispute, this movie, if eventually completed, may have much of its original footage replaced by alternative shots.

TRINDADE MALDITA ["Evil Trinity"] (1991 — written; never produced)

"Zé do Caixão appears in the main character's thoughts."

Filmography established in close consultation with José Mojica Marins, Nilcimar Leyart and Regina Andrión.

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This dossier is dedicated to Michael Secula, who provided the impetus for its compilation.

*This dossier was well under way when the author was contacted by Something Weird Video to translate and subtitle four of Marins's films for U.S. release on tape. These articles are not to be regarded as a "plug" to promote those videos; the author responds for their translation and subtitling but takes no responsibility for sleeve notes and eventual title alterations in their packaging.*



## JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS, ACTOR

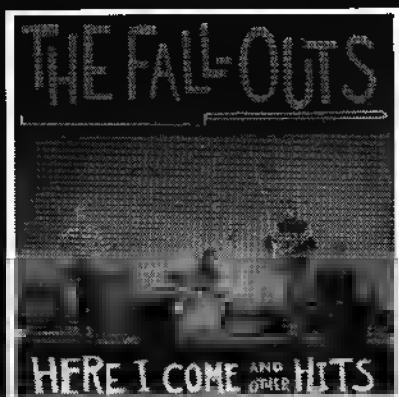
Below is a list of Marins's work as actor (titles in which the character Zé do Caixão appears are indicated by [ZdC]). Except where otherwise indicated, the movies were directed by Marins.

1959	A SINA DO AVENTUREIRO
1961	MEU DESTINO EM TUAS MÃOS
1963	A MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SUA ALMA [ZdC]
1964	O DIABO DE VILA VELHA
1966	ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER [ZdC]
1968	O CANGACEIRO SEM DEUS (d. Osvaldo de Oliveira)
	O ESTRANHO MUNDO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO [ZdC]

1969	RITUAL DOS SÁDICOS (presented in 1986 as O DESPERTAR DA BESTA) [ZdC]
	O PROFETA DA FOME (d. Maurice Capovilla)
1970	SEXO E SANGUE NA TRILHA DO TESOURO
1971	FINIS HOMINIS—O FIM DO HOMEM
1972	QUANDO OS DEUSES ADORMECEM
1973	O FRACASSO DE UM HOMEM EM DUAS NOITES DE NÚPCIAS
1974	EXORCISMO NEGRO [ZdC]
1975	A ESTRANHA HOSPEDARIA DOS PRAZERES (co-d. Marcelo Motta)
1976	INFERNO CARNAL
	AS MULHERES DO SEXO VIOLENTO (nominal d. Francisco Cavalcanti)
1977	DELÍRIOS DE UM ANORMAL [ZdC]
1978	O Universo de Mojica Marins [short] (d. Ivan Cardoso) [ZdC]
	O ABISMU, OU SOIS TODOS DE MU (d. Rogério Sganzerla)
	O SEGREDO DA MÚMIA (d. Ivan Cardoso)
1979	MUNDO MERCADO DO SEXO—MANCHETE DE JORNAL
	A DEUSA DE MÁRMORE—ESCRAVA DO DIABO (d. Rosângela Maldonado)
1980	Fogo Fátuo [short] (d. Goffredo da Silva Telles Neto) [ZdC]
1983	PADRE PEDRO E A REVOLTA DAS CRIANÇAS (d. Francisco Cavalcanti)
1985	O FILHO DO SEXO (d. Francisco Cavalcanti)
1986	HORAS EATAIS (d. Clery Cunha & Francisco Cavalcanti)
	AS BELAS DA BILLINGS (d. Ozualdo Candeias)
	A Última Sessão de Cinema [short] (d. ?) [ZdC]
	DEMÔNIOS E MARAVILHAS [unfinished] [ZdC]
1987	A Mão Parda [TV drama]
	A IRMÃ DO DEMÔNIO [unfinished] (d. Francisco Cavalcanti)
	A Hora do Brasil [short] (d. ?)
1988	Olho por Olho [TV soap]
1989	NOITES DE TERROR NO PLAYCENTER [unfinished] [ZdC]
1990	O OLHO DO PORTAL DO INFERNO [unfinished] [ZdC]
	JULIO, O MARGINAL (d. Fabrício Cavalcanti)
	OGATO DE BOTAS EXTRATERRESTRE (d. Wilson Rodrigues) [ZdC-like alien]
1992	A SEITA DOS ESPÍRITOS MALDITOS [ZdC]
1993	ALUCINAÇÃO MACABRA [ZdC]
	ZÉ DO CAIXÃO NA CIDADE DO TERROR (d. Wilson Rodrigues) [ZdC]

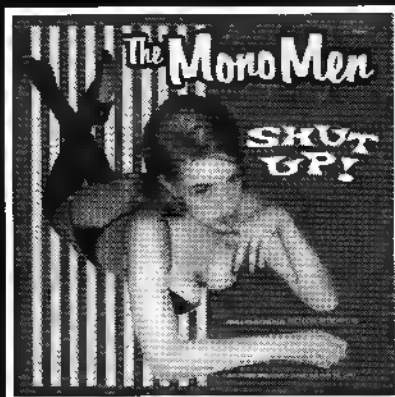


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The exorcist mutters to himself prior to the exorcism in **UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE**.

# THE EXORCIST MADE ME DO IT!

BY TIMOTHY PAXTON WITH DAVID TODARELLO

The belief that one's self or another's personality can be possessed, whether by supernatural entities (gods, demons, ghosts, etc.) or by corporeal means (hypnosis, brainwash, etc.), is a deep, hysterical and illogical fear. This idea that a human may be possessed by a supernatural personality, other than its own, happens in *all* religions. Throughout the centuries people have been slaughtered, tortured, and imprisoned because they were believed possessed by devils; their grotesque demeanor blamed on something society could neither understand or control. In our modern times 'civilized' communities worldwide have dealt with possession in a number of ways. The popular scientific approach of psychoanalysis easily explains cases of possession as mere hysteria, "diabolical possession is caused by belief in diabolical possession."<sup>1</sup> The metaphysical answer endorsed by the religiously inclined is an exorcism. "The time-honored custom of ordering demons away, by verbal charms and magical gestures, is still practiced by (1) primitive witch doctors and (2) the Catholic church. Protestant churches don't exorcise."<sup>2</sup> What constitutes a possession? Are the possessed monsters in the strictest definition? What of the exorcists and their roles in such a paranormal situation? These questions would be better answered if I were writing a dissertation on the socio-political/religious analysis of possession. But.... *Monster! International* is a movie magazine, so we had better stick to the cinematic treatment of the subject.

Cinematically, possession films have been a recent sub-category of the horror genre, their popularity building to a manic zenith within a four-year period after the release of William Friedkin's **THE EXORCIST** (1973). In these films the possessed take on the characteristics of monsters. Their physical appearance is unhealthy, and they have unusual powers not associated with their human counterparts. In almost every instance a human (most always a priest, but nuns and doctors qualify) faces the possessed creature and must oust the devil within him or her. While many of post-**EXORCIST** films betray their origin with the now popular motifs established in Friedkin's movie, there were productions prior to that landmark production. For the most part, these films were unique and, at times, misunderstood and/or disdained by the general film critic. Prior to Friedkin's feature, neither the Devil nor his minions were a popular element of this unusual sub-genre.

The characters in pre-**EXORCIST** productions were normally possessed by something other than a devil. Could this have been due to a taboo-induced nervousness Hollywood had placed on portraying the devil as real? Universal Studio's cold feet snipped Colin Clives' infamous line "Now I know what it feels like to be God!" from the James Wales 1931 classic **FRANKENSTEIN**. It wasn't until MCA re-released a "complete and uncut" edition of their videotape of the film that the controversial (but barely audible) utterance was restored. How would the early cinematic censors have reacted to the Devil's physical manifestation during possession scenes in many of the 70's **EXORCIST** clones? Satan's presentment would have broken the moral code of the time, and thus any appearance was forbidden or glossed over. (Few films from the 20's, 30's or 40's dared to be explicit in depicting the Devil or portraying his handiwork on the Earth. Edgar Ulmer's **THE BLACK CAT** [1934] approached Satanism with a rare zeal wherein Boris Karloff essays evil as Hjalmar Poelzig, the suave leader of a devil cult.) So, in that context, the Devil dabbled little with humankind. (Of course, Benjamin Christensen's **HÅKAN/WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES** [1922] is something altogether different, being a "documentary" on the subject of witches and the Devil.) For those directors who wished to circumvent this sticky topic, and were interested in the idea of a man possessed by "something" (other than women and fame), alternate means taken — with some unique results.



The spiritual possession of Leah (Lili Liliana) by the ghost of her beloved (Leon Liebgold) in the world's first exorcism film **THE DYBUK** (1937).

During the lean decades to follow, the Fiend rarely made a serious appearance in any film (outside of an odd "Passion Play" or Sunday School programmer committed to film) to challenge the will of God (that admission of moral and spiritual decay had to wait forty years). Devils were replaced by ghosts; and the reluctant recipient of their transcendental whims were usually abducted during seances or other means of spiritual contact. But, of course, any such occurrence would be explained later on in the picture as an act of charlatanry on behalf of the psychic. Despite the admission that "there are no such things as ghosts," there were few films which managed to wriggle around the inoffensive "it's just a farce" attitude. An uncanny twist to the standard fake spiritualist motif is Victor Halperin's **SUPERNATURAL**. Made in 1933 by the man who directed the excellent **WHITE ZOMBIE** (1932), this is a tale of a malicious woman who,

1. Quote attributed to Dr. Henry Ansgard Kelley of the University of California, 1970 Pg 195 Ebon, Martin. *The Satan Trap*. Doubleday & Co., New York, 1976.

2. Pg 293. Walker, Barbara. *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*. Harper & Row, New York, 1983.

betrayed by her partner, a cheap clairvoyant, is sent to the electric chair for murder. Her restless spirit returns and possesses the body of the film's heroine (Carol Lombard) and kills the man who framed her. The pacified ghost then leaves Lombard's body to return to the afterlife. **SUPERNATURAL** is a film which whets a person's appetite for more, a potential dish which was never adequately realized and rightfully exploited.

With Hollywood awash in perpetual social censorship, afraid to give the paying customer more fright for their money, it was a Polish film which pioneered the *exorcism* movies. According to Gershom Scholem in his book *Kabbalah*, stories of these *dibbukim* (literally, abbreviated from "*dibbuk me-ru'ah ra'ah*"; translated: "a cleavage of an evil spirit" and "*dibbuk min ha-bizonim*"; translated: "*dibbuk* from the demonic side"<sup>3</sup>) were/are prevalent throughout Hasidic culture. A *dibbuk* is the troubled soul of a dead person which has not been laid to rest. This spirit becomes a demon and attaches—or cleaves—itsself onto the healthy soul of a mortal and "it is thus the equivalent of possession." It is important to note that the film in which this demon/ghost-possession occurred was Michal Waszynski's **THE DYBUK/THE DYBBUK**, a rarely seen Yiddish-language production from 1937 based on a play by the famous Yiddish author S. Ansky. Waszynski's film had only been available, until recently, solely through Jewish film rental outlets and various specialty video stores. Though believed lost by many film scholars, several prints eventually turned up, although they were severely cut. Restored in 1989 by the noted National Center for Jewish Film Library, **THE DYBUK** now clocks in at a hefty 123 minutes; a good half an hour or more material was recovered. The film is intact and includes the crucial exorcism scene within the Temple which was, for reasons unknown, deleted from earlier prints.

The ancient Jewish idea of "cleaving" the soul was successfully incorporated in the 15th Century with a similar, more modern Catholic belief, closer to home and dutifully exploited by Friedkin. *Dibbukim* occur when the possessed commits "a secret sin" which opens "a door for the *dibbuk*."<sup>4</sup> There is only one way to get rid of a pesky *dibbuk* or demon, and that is to exorcise the creature. In **THE DYBUK** a rabbi must follow the proper protocols, which is true as well for the Catholic priests, who are duty-bound by a "solemn method of exorcising [which] is given in the Roman Ritual."<sup>5</sup>

The film takes place within a strict Jewish Hasidic community known as a *shtetlekh*, where two star-crossed lovers, Khonnon and Leah, are kept apart. When all fails and the impoverished young *yeshiva* student, Khonnon, turns to dark forces and appeals to Satan for aid in winning the hand of his betrothed, Leah. "If not through God, then how?" he cries desperately in the holy Temple, "Through Satan! Satan, I implore you! Help Me!" His plea is heard and a dark cloud envelops the student, who then falls dead. The corpse of Khonnon is buried and the wedding of Leah to another man is set. Before she is to be wed, Leah's father asks her to visit her mother's grave and, as tradition requests, invite her mother's soul to the festivities. However, the distraught and heartbroken Leah breaks down next to Khonnon's grave and requests his spirit to attend. During the festivities Khonnon's wandering spirit "cleaves" to Leah's soul and possesses her in an unholy supernatural bond. "The bride has been possessed by a dybbuk," announced the mysterious Messenger, a solemn figure that walks throughout the picture intoning eternal Jewish wisdom spiced with doom and gloom (which usually goes unheeded and, by law in these sort of productions, there is a price to be paid).

The Reb Sender, the town leader and father of the bride, approaches Rabbe [Rabbi] Azriel, the Tsaddik of Miropole, and asks the learned and elderly man for help in exorcising the dybbuk from Leah. The first attempt to do so is met with contempt from Khonnon's spirit. The possessed Leah scoffs at the Rebbe's initial attempt, "Do not torment me, do not harass me," Khonnon's ghost warns, "I do not fear your oaths and excommunications. There is no more exalted height higher than my present refuge." Not to be undone, the Rebbe gathers together his students, and at the foot of the alter within the Temple and faces the possessed. Rabbe Azriel first warns the rebellious Khonnon that he will be excommunicated unless the spirit vacates Leah's body. Khonnon's ghost is spiteful and the old man blasts the spirit with holy knowledge. The ghost wails in ethereal agony and departs from Leah's body. However, the lovers are united in the end as Leah reaches out to Khonnon's departing soul, and upon touching it drops dead.

There were no instances of spitting, no foul mouthing, not even an attempt by the possessed to levitate objects or to strike the holy man. This was a civil exorcism, and the first depicted within cinema. This is not to say that the excommunication of Khonnon's spirit wasn't chilling. No doubt, to the devout Jews that watched the film in 1937 and thereafter, the scene where a possessed

Leah talks back to the Tsaddik (a man who provides spiritual illumination to his community which he attains through a mystical union with God) is one impassioned with shock and emotion. What may seem tame by today's standards of horror was without a doubt as frightening to the religious who witnessed **THE DYBUK** in the 30's and 40's as where those shocked Catholics who shivered through **THE EXORCIST**.

Science fiction in the 40's had one way to skirt the issue in 1944 when Eric Von Stroheim played mad scientist to a couple of pounds of flesh in **THE LADY AND THE MONSTER**. The movie was the first version of the oft-filmed *Donovan's Brain* novel by noted SF author Curt Siodmak, and directed by George Sherman. In both the fiction work and film, millionaire tycoon Donovan is injured in an airplane accident and rushed to the abode of a slightly unorthodox scientist-doctor (Stroheim). There his brain is removed from his ruined body and kept alive in a jar bathed in nutrient-enriched fluids. The brain gains enormous telepathic powers once freed from the constraints of a body. Donovan's sinister gray matter uses these newly acquired energies to capture the will of a man. This psychic possession by a monstrous brain is without a doubt one of the most intriguing (and frequently copied) science fiction inventions. Science fiction would offer supplemental possessions by other means. Aliens enjoyed a brief period of ego-snatching in the 50's with **THE BEAST WITH A MILLION EYES** (1955, D: David Kramarsky), **QUATERMASS II/ENEMY FROM SPACE** (1957, D: Val Guest), **KRONOS** (1957, D: Kurt Neuman), **WAR OF THE SATELLITES** (1957, D: Roger Corman), **THE BRAIN EATERS** (1958, D: Bruno Ve Sota), **THE BRAIN FROM PLANET AROUS** (1958, D: Nathan Hertz), and **THE INVISIBLE INVADERS** (1959, D: Sam Newfield) and others, but none dealt with demonic possession and exorcism.

Devils and demons still lurked within the minds of screenwriters. Nevertheless, the ideas of demonic possession had to wait until the time came when our society (Hollywood, manager of America's collective consciousness) was unashamed to deal openly (i.e. cinematically, thus socially en masse) with such "sins" and their deadly, prophetic payback. The 60's opened with dead witches possessing the living as in Mario Bava's ground-breaking **LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO/BLACK SUNDAY** (1960), and two English ghosts were out to steal the souls of a little boy and girl in **THE INNOCENTS** (1960, D: Jack Clayton)<sup>6</sup>. Then the Devil began spreading his seed in Roman Polanski's oft-copied **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (1968), and a Satanist's powerful post-death ego enveloping a man in the cheap-shot **THE MEPHISTO WALTZ** (1971, D: Paul Wendkos). The occasional science fiction/horror production such as Eugene Martin's wonderful **PANICO EN EL TRANSIBERIANO/HORROR EXPRESS** (1972) was a relief as was Tom Moore's rarely seen **MARK OF THE WITCH** (1970, see page 60). Hardcore made a token stab at the horror genre when Gerard Damiano put **THE DEVIL IN MISS JONES** (1972).<sup>7</sup> But that wasn't going far enough. Documented cases of the Devil possessing men, women, children, and even animals were available, but not much was done to make them into true horror films. Since **THE DYBUK** there had yet to be an exorcist chasing these possessed souls and driving the devil from them.

Therefore, before this article fragments any further (as possession films are many, depending on your definition), I will now concentrate solely on the post-**EXORCIST** productions that plagued theatres worldwide primarily in the mid-70's emphasizing the marvelous mimicry of the Italian and Spanish movie industry, before the influence of **THE OMEN**, **HALLOWEEN**, and **CARRIE** took their toll. For the sake of space I will examine their handiwork, along with some American, Brazilian, British, German, Mexican, and Turkish productions. The super-kinetic hijinks of the powerful Hong Kong possession genre will have to wait until another installment is readied.

For those of you who haven't seen **THE EXORCIST**, I suggest seeing it for historic reasons, although the terror in it is subdued and at times lacking (especially when compared to later European productions). For additional information on this film, read just about any good book on horror movies—

3 Pg 349. Scholem, Gershom, *Kabbalah* (1974), Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., Jerusalem, Israel.

4. Pg 349. Ibid.

5. Pg 139. Petefi, Raphael. *Myth and Modern Man* Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972.

6. This is debatable. For some critics, **THE INNOCENTS** is not a ghost film at all, but a psychodrama where the nanny of the two children is usaued and imagines the whole thing. Unfortunately, by the end of the film, in this version of events, she kills the little boy and blames it on a ghost. But we know better....

7. In this Gerard Damiano film, Miss Jones (Georgina Spelvin) kills herself and lands in purgatory. There she is possessed by a sexually-overactive demon and sent earthbound to fuck anyone and everyone. This sad production is spiced by some real plot twists and a graal last five minutes where Miss Jones is back in her own personal hell where she cannot be sexually satisfied by her sole roommate, a man too concerned with fly shit to pay any attention to her squirming, aching genitalia.



**L'ANTICRISTO:** Although the *Exorcist* (Arthur Kennedy) has his bible destroyed, he continues the ritual by laying a crucifix on the possessed Carla (Carla Gravina). The Roman Catholic Church maintains the office of exorcist, whose rite of ordination states: "An Exorcist must cast out devils."<sup>9</sup>

there should be entire chapters dedicated to this influential film and its impact on modern day fright flicks.<sup>8</sup> It's odd, though, while **THE EXORCIST** changed the face of horror films for years to come (as did the before mentioned **LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO**), it seems tame when compared to the many imitations which followed in its wake. What Friedkin did with William Peter Blatty's book was to take the initial horror (leaving out all the parts dealing with temptation for some reason) and put substance to it. Subsequently, in productions like Alberto De Martino's notable **L'ANTICRISTO/THE TEMPTER** (1974) and Amando de Ossorio's morbid **EL PODER DE LAS TINIEBLAS/DEMON WITCH CHILD/THE POSSESSED** (1974) that quality was beefed up and served as a full course meal. Few were novel in their conception, borrowing heavily from the original. Nevertheless, the films were entertaining in their execution, and some of them are excellent examples of horror. For some reason, no doubt an obsession with Catholic guilt and pent-up sexuality, the Italians produced more possession/exorcism-oriented monster productions than any other European country on the map (Hong Kong being the relative counterpart for the Asian end of the spectrum for different reasons).

If we are going to approach this chronologically rather than alphabetically by title beginning in 1974, then one should start with De Martino's **L'ANTICRISTO**. The **HOUSE OF EXORCISM** (available under the video title **DEVIL IN THE HOUSE OF EXORCISM**), originally known as **LISA E IL DIAVOLO/LISA ANO THE DEVIL**, is Mario Bava's excessive tribute to Evil incarnate, and the film, originally made in 1972, has nothing whatsoever to do with *bodily* demonic possession. In it Elke Sommer is trapped in a spooky mansion in which the Devil plays with the souls he has captured. **LISA E IL DIAVOLO** is a beautiful mood piece and Bava's convoluted, nonsensical, but delightfully giddy masterpiece. What was done to it in 1975 to make it *profitable* for the US market is a true nightmare. The transformation of Bava's work into a possession vehicle took little or no effort on the part of director/producer Alfredo Leone, who acquired Robert Alda to act as a priest who must exorcise the devil from a possessed Sommer. In this *revised* edition, Sommer's soul was yanked by the Devil (Telly

Savalas) during her stay at an angst-filled mansion. There are supplemental post-1972 sequences in which Sommer with chapped lips and red eyes vomits and screams curses at the ineffectual exorcist. It's a mess. Luckily, for those of you who have the money, Redemption Video, a British company, has recently released the uncut Italian version on VHS. God bless them!

**1974:** what a year! It was during this comparatively short period of time that the best imitations emerged. With Linda Blair's tortured image still fresh in the world's imagination, directors scrambled to set in motion their own variations on the theme. What country best to sponsor the sickest entries than Italy, home to the best Hollywood copy-cat directors the world over. Within months after **THE EXORCIST** was released, it was dissected, ingested, disgorged and excreted. Satan, his demons, and their devil-driven witches were to elope with souls of crippled women, naive virgins, and innocent children — and what a wild ride they would set us on!

Alberto De Martino's amazing **L'ANTICRISTO** was a favorite second and third billing in many a drive-in here in the States, even though the best scenes were snipped by sweaty-palmed censors. Always a man who was able to make a film look better than its budget would generally allow, De Martino fashioned one of the most original and best-looking of the **EXORCIST** clones. The film is quenched with dramatic cinematography, decent acting from all involved, guileful special effects, and a restrained though exhilarating score by Ennio Morricone with Bruno Nicolai.

Crippled when young, a wheelchair-bound Carla (Carla Gravina) is bitter and resentful at not having a fulfilled sex life. One night alone in her villa, she discovers an old playing card with the picture of the devil on it. An odd sensation surges through her lethargic loins and they burn as if on fire. That night at dinner she insults her family as she hurls obscenities at her recently re-married father (the late Mel Ferrer, an arch-duke in the kingdom of Italian Sleaze and star of multitude of giallo movies) and his new wife (Anita Strindberg, passive sleazette of Euro-cinema) as windows slam shut, pictures on the wall dance in mid air, and candles flair. The possession has begun.

However, at the point when you assume that the film is becoming nothing short of a brazen **EXORCIST** rip-off, De Martino pulls his trump card and delivers the sickest moment in this sub-genre's short history. When Carla retires to her bed she is metaphysically transported back to the middle ages and becomes involved in a Black Mass. She is initiated with her ancestor, a witch who was executed for devilry. During the unholy mass the startled woman is fed the head of a toad and introduced to the Goat God. In a scene

<sup>8</sup> Books to look out for: Kim Newman's highly entertaining and critical look at *Nightmare Movies*, Chapter "Devil Movies", 1989, Harmony Books; and Phil Hardy's flawed but essential *The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies*, numerous entries by year of production, 1986, Harper & Row, for example. Issue 6 of Tim Lucas' *Video Watchdog* has monstrous coverage on the film as well.

<sup>9</sup> The quote comes from Pg 208 of Montague Summer's book *The Discovery of Witches*, Cayme press, London, 1928; and Pg 293 Walker, Barbara, *Ibid*. It has just come to light that in 1982 Pope John Paul II performed an exorcism on a possessed woman. The said woman fell before him "rolling on the floor and shouting." The pontiff didn't bat an eye and recited the trusty "Rite of Exorcism." The demons fled and the woman was cured.

which may leave many viewers choking, Carla is made to *tongue the puckering anus of a live goat* (this sequence was snipped for US release). She licks her chops and the Devil enters her by the way of spiritual rape. Her body trembles with each demonic thrust and her soul is soon secured by Satan. This dreamy though disgusting performance is punctuated by luscious cinematography by none other than Aristide Massaccesi aka Joe D'Amato, one of Italy's most prolific genre/sleazy directors to date.

The experience leaves Carla with new energies and she is able to walk, where upon she ambles into the countryside and spies a busload of Euro tourists. She lures away a young German and immediately fucks the lad and twists his head off. She becomes increasingly rude to her family and they call the local herbalist, who tries to exorcise Carla. After the herbalist's humiliating defeat her family gets wise to the fact that Carla is "unwell" and her father sends for the provincial exorcist. The priest arrives and the fun begins. After a lengthy exorcism which fails miserably, Carla escapes from her house and runs into a rain-filled night. The determined cleric and Carla's step-father follow the woman and a fierce battle for her soul occurs in and around the Coliseum. Cornered by her parent, Carla is at last released from the grasp of the Devil by means of a large wooden crucifix thrust between her legs.

Few films from this year could measure up to *L'ANTICRISTO*'s intensity, although *CHI SEI?/BEYOND THE DOOR* has enough spookiness and plot twists to keep any die-hard monster fan entertained. What initially begins as dull and dry plot lumping *ROSEMARY'S BABY* with *THE EXORCIST*, directors Sonia Assonitis and Robert d'Ettore Piazzoli slowly — and painfully — take a potentially do-nothing possession film and surprise their audience. It

takes almost an hour, but *CHI SEI?* evolves into a sick and cruel (and pretty damn clever) joke.

*CHI SEI?* stars the late, former Shakespearean stage actor-cum-exploitation king Richard Johnson, star of the 1961 Robert Wise classic ghost/possession flick *THE HAUNTING* and numerous odious Italian productions such as Lucio Fulci's dual shockers *ZOMBI 2/ZOMBIE* (1979) and *PAURA NELLA CITTÀ DEI MORTI VIVENTI/GATES OF HELL* (1980), Sergio Martino's *L'ISOLA DEGLI UOMINI PESCE/SCREAMERS* (1979), and Massimo Dallamano's possession film *IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO/THE NIGHT CHILD* (1974). Johnson is a mysterious stranger who complicates the life of a woman and her family. This is no ordinary family unit, though, as the pregnant mother is carrying a possessed child. The unborn creature's influence has its mother floating through the air, puking up blue glop, and cursing all who dare approach her. All of these horrors justifiably confuse her husband and their two children. Toss in the arrival of the ghost of her former lover Dimetri, who died in a car crash ten years earlier and recently resurrected by Satan, and you have another fine entry into this category of film.

The surprising climax comes from the ghost (Johnson) who is haunting his ex. Keeping the baby alive is the spirit's goal. If the child is born this side of the grave, the Devil promised Dimetri that his soul will be reincarnated into the newborn. However, just before the tot is to be brought into the world Satan gleefully informs the ghost that everything is all a farce. That is, our ever-vigilant shade will *not* be able to possess the child, even though the Prince of Lies pledged that he could. In fact, the child will not be possessed by anybody. The Devil was doing all of this just to be nasty! In a fit of rage Dimetri pounds away



**L'ANTICRISTO (1974):** In a failed attempt to drive the devil from Carla (Carla Gravina), the old priest (George Coulouris) and his assistant are mocked and spat upon.



at the swollen belly of the woman, crying in defiance until he collapses to the floor in a pile of clothing. The husband rushes into the room to discover his wife has given birth to a dead, deformed child (albino and without a mouth) in a sea water-soaked pile of rags on the floor. Cut away to the happy family on a boat. There they are celebrating the birthday of their youngest child, a boy who is in turn possessed by the devil.

**CHI SEI?** has its moments, in spite of the irritatingly dull segments. There is an unnerving scene in which an army of dolls come alive and terrorize the two kids, a creepy sequence where our expected mother eats a rotten banana peel off the sidewalk, and the crazed fury in which Dimetri pummels the pregnant woman. By the end of the film, when the deformed child is uncovered, there is a real sense of pity, for both the child and the ghost.

Whereas Assonitis and Piazzoli's film was a slow-starter which developed into an original brain-twister, the inverse can be said of director Mario Gariazzo's **L'OSSESSA / THE SEXORCIST / THE EERIE MIDNIGHT HORROR SHOW**. **L'OSSESSA** begins as an original film which after a half an hour degenerates into another mindlessly entertaining clone. The first half of the film is filled with respectably original ideas, while the last half, sadly, apes **THE EXORCIST**. Gariazzo introduces the evil force in the shape of a wooden Medieval statue, that alone sets it apart as being at least partially innovative. The artifact is of one of the two thieves who was tied to a cross and accompanied Jesus Christ on Calvary. In undoubtedly the film's best series of events leading up to the initial possession, a young woman painter (Stella Carnacina) accompanies some art restorationists to collect the large statue. It was uncovered in an old abandoned church where orgies had been going on for hundreds of years. They dislodge the life-sized statue and cart it back to their studio on a flatbed truck — with Stella practically drooling at its masculine beauty all the way there. Back at the studio they place the sculpture on a slab (unbound from the cross so they can work on restoring it). Alone, Stella is gripped by the thing's sheer demonic presence and when it creaks to life and rapes her she becomes possessed.

Enter the brief though destructive encounter with "Evil" and things start looking familiar: vomiting (here it looks as if she's regurgitating melted pistachio ice cream and candle wax), levitation, and so forth. In the final conflict between girl and super-priest, Stella attempts to seduce the man instead of grossing him out. It almost works. With renewed strength the exhausted priest faces his possessed adversary again, and the confrontation moves to an old church. There he is struck and killed the very instant that Stella is freed from her "sexual" possession.

Better known for his violent Westerns (**DIO PERDONA LA MIA PISTOLA** /



*Carla Gravina is exorcised by her step-father Mel Ferrer in Alberto De Martino's **L'ANTICRISTO** (1974).*



*Juliet Mills is the woman terrorized by her unborn child -- which is possessed by the devil in the oddly chilling **CHI SEI?** (1974)*

GOD WILL FORGIVE MY PISTOL, 1969; and ACQUASANTA JOE/HOLY WATER JOE, 1971) director Mario Gariazzo almost had something going right in the first twenty minutes of the film. The motif about the "living" statue could have been interesting to develop. Gariazzo would have had a bizarre Possession film crossed with **CURSE OF THE FACELESS MAN** (1958, D: Edward L. Cahn) if he played his cards right. However, the bets were weighted heavily in favor of **THE EXORCIST** and Gariazzo had to accommodate his paying audience. The folks who crammed into smoky Euro-theatres demanded the best imitations of US products their home-grown directors could supply. When the demand dictates the product, you gotta do what you gotta do.

Children fare pretty well in most horror films despite the fact that they are often the receptacles of evil. Their innocence and pre-pubescent acceptance of the world as Good makes them without a doubt easy prey for scriptwriters

Richard Johnson (again) stars as a British TV documentary producer who is researching a program on Satanic paintings. In his pursuit of oddball material he comes across an Italian painting depicting Hell. What's unusual about this work is that it features a flaming woman in the upper left hand of the hellish scene. Upon closer inspection, he is shocked to see the figure resembles his recently deceased wife (who died mysteriously in a fire). The image is also wearing an amulet very similar to one he bought for his wife shortly before her death. His probing for the origins of the painting leads him, his daughter (to whom he gave the amulet), and his new secretary/lover to a mysterious castle in Italy. There the child becomes possessed by an evil spirit and panic erupts.

By the end of **IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO** it is uncovered that the child was *even* possessed when she burned her mother to death and tries to do the same to her father's new mistress! The terror builds and the little girl confronts the demonic painting in an abandoned chapel. In that sacred place she wields an uniquely double-bladed sword and sets to work destroying the piece of satanic art. We are unexpectedly jolted from our seats as Johnson rushes into the chapel and attempts to stop his daughter from her task. She turns to him as he gathers her in his arms for a loving hug. To our surprise *both* parent and child die, blood spraying everywhere, as the razor-sharp blades pierce their bodies.

Another Possession Flick which sacrifices a young child in the triumph of Good over Evil is Amando De Ossorio's creepy **EL PODER DE LAS TINIEBLAS**. In the late 60's throughout the 70's, and even into the early 80's, Spain's chief producer of nightmare flicks was without a doubt Amando De Ossorio. While other Spaniards may have produced more films (Paul Naschy and Jesús Franco, for example), few were able to match Oe Ossorio when it came to atmosphere and chills (of course, that may not be saying much considering the rarity of Spanish horror films in total). His *Blind Dead* trilogy is still considered the pinnacle of Spanish horror, although other directors like



*Possessed children are often the most lurid: a scene from Massimo Dallamano's manic masterpiece of EXORCIST-derivative horror IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO (1974).*

looking for chills. What is spookier than an ebullient young lass that suddenly switches gears and spits insults, levitates, and practices projectile vomiting? Most of these possessed children endure their ordeals and lead a blissful existence in an ideal cinematic afterlife. However, there are those few dark productions in which the youngster *doesn't* survive.

The few bits of EXORCIST-familiarity which creep into **IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO** are more than compensated for by other eerie elements the late director Massimo Dallamano (who died in a car crash in 1976) was able to conjure up. The possession stems from the ownership of an arcane artifact which emanates evil. Oallamano handles the film with a subtle flare, and despite the fact that he's working with a bad scrip manages to pull **IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO** through all the rough spots. Maybe it's due to his working under the creative wing of Sergio Leone on the Western epics **PER UN PUGNO DI DOLLARI/A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS** (1964) and **PER QUALCHE DOLLARO IN PIÙ/A FEW DOLLARS MORE** (1965) that saves this little picture from being something other than another exploitative blunder. Of course, it doesn't hurt that he also directed his own well-received Western **CREPA TU... CHE VIVO IO/BANDIDOS** (1967), the superior Giallo-thriller **COSA AVETE FATTO A SOLANGE?/WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE?** (1971) as well as the sleazy **IL DIO CHIAMATO DORIAN/SECRET OF DORIAN GRAY** (1972).

Franco, Jorge Grau, Carlos Aured, and Leon Klimovsky each have produced their own masterpieces.

The film opens and we are introduced to the evil which will soon plunge everyone involved into a bloodbath. An old gnarled woman, caught kidnapping an infant for Satanic sacrifice, is taken to Madrid's main police station for questioning. Instead of telling the officials about the whereabouts of the child, the witch opts to kill herself by jumping out of the fourth floor window of the building. Her soul enters the body of the police inspector's ten-year-old daughter, Susan, who then becomes a foul-mouthed devil-kid.

The little monster floats in the air and has bad breath. She also hurls insults at her mother ("Aw, why don't you just fuck your boyfriend!"), kicks people, taunts a priest ("Does a priest have the same thing as a man? Are you queer or just impotent?"), gives her mid-section a spine-snapping 360 whirl, and all the remarkable insubordination associated with demon-possessed little girls. When Susan's maid cleans the little girl's room she is blitzed by plush animals, and her mother uncovers a phallic-shaped demonic icon in the toy box. The horror continues: a child is found sacrificed, the lover of Susan's mother has his penis cut off (and you-know-who gives it to her mother in a pretty little gift box), and a man is strangled. The monstrous child (now looking like the old witch, complete with balding head, wrinkles, white hair, and bad teeth) abducts another toddler and prepares the babe for sacrifice. A priest leads a joint



JULIAN MATEOS • MARIAN SALGADO

FERNANDO SANCIO • LONE FLEMING • ANGEL DEL POZO

ROBERTO CASARIDIFI Y MARIA KOSTI

UNA PRODUCCION RICHARD FILMS, P.C.

AMANDO DE OSSORIO

PRODUCCION PARA ISAAC HERNANDEZ

### Spanish ad mat for *DEMON WITCH CHILD/THE POSSESSED*

investigation with the police and disrupts the Black Mass before the child is to be cut open for the Devil. The horribly disfigured Susan flees to the grave of the old witch with the cleric in hot pursuit. In a surprising conclusion the girl dies when she is impaled by a large metal cross in a churchyard.

De Ossario treads the unpleasant territory of pedicide when he sacrificed the child at the end of this grisly picture. Typically, a young girl would escape the clutches of the devil and live to tell the tale. In this film, and others like *IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO* and *THE CHILD* (available on video as *KILL AND GO HIDE*, 1977, D: Robert Voskanian), it would seem that the evil cannot be successfully abolished unless the poor child is herself exterminated.

Not far behind his fellow Spaniard, actor-screenwriter Jacinto Molina (aka Paul Naschy) struck on the idea of making a possession film. Now, his producing, directing, writing, and starring in monster films based on other popular critters is not new. Any monster fan worth his or her weight in salt should know this for a fact. Next to Lon Chaney, Jr., Paul Naschy is werewolf personified (he made numerous films featuring his hirsute alter-ego Waldimar Daninsky). Being a monster is his love in life. However, what makes his casting in Juan Bosch's *EXORCISMO/EXORCISM* so unique is that, like a few of Naschy's crime films, he *doesn't* play the part of a monster. In fact, in this Spanish production Naschy is a good guy — *he's the exorcist*.

After a night of erotic, dope-smoking, Satanic group-coupling, Richard Harrington and his lover, Lela Gibson, drive home in their Morris Minor. On their way to the girl's family chateau in Bristol (this Spanish-made film takes place in England), the drugged-fogged Lela, loses control of the car and sends it careening down a hillside, where in an unconscious state she becomes possessed. Her mother frets as Lela acts more and more demonic, and calls upon the local priest. Enter Naschy as Father Adrian Dunning, putting in an unobtrusive acting job and never showing much more emotion than a man on vallium. However, this soon changes and our burly priest manages to glare menacingly and bare his teeth when it becomes obvious that after Lela's near-fatal accident she has become possessed by her late father's jealous spirit. It seems that he went mad shortly before his death and was institutionalized. While dying at the asylum his wife had an affair with his doctor. Upon expiring he gained that knowledge, and when he has the chance entered into his daughter's body and "cleaves" to her soul. Now spewing rude comments, vomiting gobs of goo, attacking everyone in sight, and levitating in bed, Lela wreaks havoc with her mother. It's up to a heroic Dunning to save the day.

As *EXORCISMO* comes to the long anticipated showdown, the once physically delightful Lela is now a scarred, marbled-eyed, puke-spitting, boil and seeping wound-encrusted mess. In a last ditch effort to save the girl's soul Dunning forces the demon to transfer itself into the body of the family dog, Borg. The hound then viciously attacks Dunning, mauling the priest's arm while receiving a fatal blow from a fireplace poker. As the animal expires, the devil is exorcised and Lela returns to normal.

Probably more a blatant rip-off of *THE EXORCIST* than any other film to date, *EXORCISMO* does have its moments. The make-up job on Lela is impressive, especially considering the contacts the poor actress had to endure which made her eyes bulge out of their sockets with a pupilless, cataract look. Unlike other men Naschy worked with before striking out on his own directorial efforts (most notably Javier Aguirre and José Luis Merino), director Bosh lacks any whimsy when it comes to innovative camera work or character development (Naschy sleepwalks through his role as the priest), and not much has been heard of him since this film was made.

Taking a viewpoint that is more in line with his own cinematic sensibilities, another Spaniard, Jesús Franco, joined the fray and produced a unique deviation on the theme. The sexual possession of a woman by another female is not new in the cinema, although Franco's approach is, without a doubt, one of the illest. Bordering on his obsession with pornography, it's small wonder the film opens up and continues to have frequent semi-hardcore lesbian sex scenes (the majority of which star his actress-wife, Lina Romay). As is usual for a film of this breed, *LES POSSEDEES OU DIABLE (LORNA L'EXORCISTE)*/"Women Possessed By The Devil (Lorna: The Exorcist)" is a sex film with high horror overtones. Anyone familiar with the director's work would be interested in taking a look at this production, while it is not as brilliantly bizarre as his Horror Trilogy from 1972 (see the article *Monster! International* #2), *LES POSSEDEES DU DIABLE* is blue enough to rank with most of his other films from the 70's, albeit as a possession movie it just barely makes it. There are relatively few references to *THE EXORCIST*, other than an exploitative title. However, since this is the closest one can come to a strictly sleazy Euro-approach to the theme (mixing sex and the devil) outside of the "lost" film *LOS RITOS SEXUALES DEL DIABLO*/"Sex Rituals Of The Devil" (1981, D: José

## LA POSSEDEE



INTERDIT AUX MOINS DE 18 ANS

couleurs

Italian video box cover art from Jesús Franco's *LES POSSEDEES DU DIABLE* (1974).



*A macabre Spanish poster for the "lost" sex & possession film **LDS RITOS SEXUALES DEL DIABLO** (1981).*

Ramón Larraz), it is included in the overall article. The delicious perversion which arises with mixing these two volatile subjects simmers and comes to a laconic boil when small fiddler crabs emerge from the genitalia of the possessed female lead. The ordeal continues even after her boyfriend confronts the person responsible (a high-class blonde witch-bitch) and shoots her. Regardless, his girlfriend continues to spit out the crustaceans and eventually expires in his arms. Anyone else's exploitive direction would have hampered the precise build up of horror in this film, so when Franco's exceptional camera work and dilatory direction takes over, the instances with the crabs are eerie

enough to spook (if not confound) anyone.

German horror films aren't usually rated very well, although there have been exceptions (Michael Armstrong's **HEXEN BIS AUFS BLUT GEQUAELT/ MARK OF THE DEVIL**, 1969, for instance) even though it did manage to produce a minor **EXORCIST** clone when director Michael Walter made **MAGDALENA - VOM TEUFEL BESESSEN/BEYOND THE DARKNESS**. This morbid tale of a demon-possessed cocktease wasn't released in the States until 1976, and despite the title, there is little to recommend other than various choice bits of dialogue and deviantly provocative situations. A grisly opening sequence where a streetwalker discovers an old man crucified to a door is well worth the fright, although little else reaches that heightened sense of the ghastly.

Magdalena Winter is the beautiful "cloistered nun" of a teenager in an otherwise sexually over wrought boarding school for girls. While she is attending school, her doting grandfather is found nailed to a door on the night of Ash Wednesday. On his forehead is burned a strange icon, that of a raven's claw. Baffled, the police question various people and they come up empty — except that Magdalena is involved in some odd way. A gala is held at the school and Magdalena, unaware that her grandfather is dead and his corpse is stretched out in the morgue, sips at some wine and parties with her chums. Suddenly at the morgue the loud buzz-buzz of a fly appears and the mutilated corpse of Grandpa Winter bolts upright the very same instant that Magdalena is stuck down with what looks like an epileptic fit. As her peers shun her twitching body the careening buzz of a bothersome insect is heard, and it seems to settle on the girl. The possession of Magdalena has begun! After a few instances of manic violence where Magdalena threatens the lives of her loved ones, she is again taken by the demonic spirit of her lecherous grandfather. The demon attacks her again and violently rapes her in her bed, not unlike similar occurrences which happen in **L'ANTICRISTO**, **NURSE SHERRI** (1976, D: Al Adamson) and Sidney J. Furie's 1982 sex-possession production **THE ENTITY** where, of all people, Barbara Hershey is the focus of a fornication-famished phantasm. This time around, the monstrous possession takes a firm hold on the teenager's tender soul and turns her into a cock-crazed sex kitten.

Despite the first intriguing twenty minutes, the remainder of the film fails to hold up under any sort of critical scrutiny. Director Walter never explores any interesting avenues, rather he focuses on Magdalena's apparent bout with Turret's Syndrome and her rampant sexuality. A few chuckles are chalked up whenever the spirit within the woman verbally attacks nearby individuals. Magdalena is brought to church the day after her ghost-rape where she is introduced to the parish's priest. She marches up to the man of the cloth and announces, "I want to take communion. But not in my mouth, but down here — in my pussy!" The startled priest is sprayed with additional insults: "You dirty nun-fucker! So, when are you going to screw your housekeeper again? Answer me, you motherfucker!" The Father reads from the New Testament and attempts to calm her heated and possessed soul. It does no good because Magdalena tears the bible in half and storms out of the chapel to find more poor horny men to tease! Before the inevitable exorcism she manages to taunt two drunken slob into a brawl ("I want you inside me... Fuck me! ... The winner gets me. I'm worth it too. I need it badly! Ha Ha Ha!") and one of the men stabs the other to death. The possessed girl then sets fire to a doctor's country abode, axes the man who loves her, and then is forced to recite the Lord's Prayer. She manages to gurgle a few lines before coughing up a snake (the devil tormenting her) which is stomped on by her boyfriend. The pretty Magdalena is saved

*Devils, demons, and ghosts delight in possessing the weak and unsuspecting -- especially voluptuous women who have the unfortunate happen: the monsters gain control of their souls by way of demonic rape. Not a pleasant manner to be violated as this scene from Al Adamson's **NURSE SHERRI** (1976) would have us believe. This sort of possession also occurred in Alberto De Martino's **L'ANTICRISTO** and Michael Walter's **MAGDALENA - VOM TEUFEL BESESSEN** (both 1974).*





Brazilian filmmaker José Mojica Marins plays himself in his only exploration into the 70's possession cycle: **EXORCISMO NEGRO** (1974).

during the quickest exorcism ever — and it's not even performed by a priest!

Brazil's José Mojica Marins explored the dynamics of a dualistic existences when he portrays himself in **EXORCISMO NEGRO**/"Black Exorcism" and comes face to face with his evil alter-ego Zé do Caixão. Marins is haunted by his own creation in this exorcist tale spiced with Catholic imagery and Macumba spells. Seeking a vacation from the hectic routine of filmmaking, Marins arrives home for the Christmas holiday to spend time with family and friends. He parties a little, then retires one evening to begin working on his next horror film. While puzzling over the new plot an evil force invades his home and possesses various loved ones. Each person possessed snarls and attacks Mojica, and he soon suspects witchcraft is afoot. It isn't until his friend's daughter is kidnapped by his cinematic alter-ego Zé that he must face the facts: his fictional demon has become a reality through the Black Arts. In a decent battle for the soul of his daughter, Marins comes face to with Zé and brandishes a hurriedly constructed cross. The symbol of good wards off the evil and saves the day.

**EXORCISMO NEGRO** isn't as powerful a film as you would imagine, coming from the man who made the creepy and sadistically violent Zé do Caixão trilogy *À MEIA-NOITE LEVAREI SU ALMA*/"At Midnight I'll Take Away Your Soul" (1965), *ESTA NOITE ENCARNAREI NO TEU CADÁVER*/"Tonight I'll Be Incarnated Into Your Corpse" (1966), and *O ESTRANHO MUNDO DE ZÉ DO CAIXÃO*/"The Strange World Of Zé do Caixão" (1968). The weakness, no doubt, lies in the fact that Marins had little to do with the project other than star in it and work on the script. His direction is uninspired, and the principal photography (which was in color) was left to one of Brazil's top cinematographers. Still, despite these obvious handicaps, **EXORCISMO NEGRO** is able to produce ample chills for the viewer. One scene in particular has Marins stumbling into a room where the oldest daughter of this friend is trembling and squirming as if the spirit that dominates her is virtually squeezing her soul into a sexual pulp. His utter revulsion upon discovering her drives the point home that he must destroy his evil alter ego Zé. The final confrontation between the maker and his shade is filled with torture, bloodshed, and nudity one comes to expect from a Marins horror film — the problem is, we had to wait over an hour to see the carnage.

Turning stateside for the last Possession Film of this bountiful year, **ABBY** is

William Girdler's plunge into the realm of demon disarray. The film is still banned by Warner Brothers from being released on legitimate video because of the supposed similarities between it and Friedkin's production. There are some affinities, but the dissimilarities are there as well. **ABBY** is *not* a Black version of **THE EXORCIST**. There are enough distinguishing points of originality which keeps it from becoming just another horror film in blackface. **ABBY** is *not* another **BLACKENSTEIN** (1973, D: William A. Levey) which was, despite some neat tricks, a tired re-telling of the rampaging patchwork creation of a misguided scientist bent on helping humanity. Whereas **BLACKENSTEIN** and the interesting but flawed **DR. BLACK, MR. HYDE** (1976, D: William Crain) fed off of blackploitation motifs (the bad white guys, etc.), and **BLACULA** (1972, D: William Crain) attempted a reasonably true to form Hammeresque approach (despite faults, **SCREAM, BLACULA, SCREAM** [1973, D: Bob Kelljan] was superior in many ways to the last few Hammer vampire outings), Girdler's **ABBY** relied heavily on the popular fusion of African religious beliefs with that of the rich US Black religious heritage. There is a distinct African-American feel to the production, something that a number of other low-budget blackploitation projects lacked. And besides that the film is scary.

Professor/Bishop Garnet Williams (genre actor William Marshall, star of **SCREAM, BLACULA, SCREAM**, **STAR TREK** episode "The Ultimate Computer", the defunct **PEEWEE'S PLAYHOUSE**'s "King of Cartoons", and the violent 1957 Rock Hudson/Sidney Poitier vehicle **SOMETHING OF VALUE**), on a trip to Nigeria comes across an ancient relic in a forbidden cave. The object is a small stone vessel with the carved image of a man possessing a huge erect penis. Puzzled at first on how to open the container, Williams, a religion professor of Louisville University on sabbatical in Nigeria to study the cult of Eshu, twists the image's erect member and the lid pops open. There is a rush of foul air, and the entire cave shakes with the force of a minor earthquake. Unwittingly, Professor Williams has unleashed a minor demon of the Eshu cult. This particular cult relishes disaster and death ... and the spirit unleashed is a really nasty one. Being especially shitty, this minor god of sexuality and mischief (known as "The Trickster" to the Yoruba religion) escapes the cave, killing everyone but Williams — the monster has plans to torment him further!

Back in the United States William's son Rev. Emmett (Terry Carter, star of Jack



Hill's **FOXY BROWN**, 1974) and his wife Abby (Carole Speed, who sang the production's theme song "My Soul is a Witness") move into their new home. Everything is perfect: Emmett is a nice guy who doesn't drink or smoke or cuss, and Abby is a pretty, faithful, and God-fearing woman — just ripe for demonic pickings! While taking a shower she is taken by the minion of Eshu and a chill wind blows through the house, knocking down dishes and lamps. Just to make sure Abby is in the monster's control, the devil violently possesses her for a second time in the basement while she is putting clothes in the washer.

During a church picnic Abby takes a large butcher knife and slashes her wrists. Emmett bites his lip and suspects something is dreadfully wrong with his once stable wife. He consults a doctor who prescribes a lot of rest and some sleeping pills. Things get worse as Abby vomits during church, and attacks one of the church-goers — urping goo upon the poor sod. Then while she is counseling a church couple who is having trouble with their marriage, Abby rips her shirt off and announces she's going to "fuck the shit" out of the startled husband. Emmett interrupts his wife's flagrantly blasphemous actions, only to have his masculinity insulted in front of friends. Abby then torments an elderly woman to the point that the oldster has a heart attack and dies. Fearing something more than common insanity is the cause of his wife's wild ways, Emmett calls his Father in Nigeria and begs for help. It sounds like demonic possession, Professor Williams concludes, and hops on the next flight to the USA.

Our heroes are joined by Abby's police detective brother Cass Porter (Austin Stoker, star of Carpenter's 1976 classic thriller **ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13** and director Girdler's 1975 **SHEBA BABY** which co-starred Blackploitational queen Pam Grier) and the three of them comb the streets looking for the wayward demon. Meanwhile Abby picks up men and proceeds to fuck them then twist their heads in the traditional 180 degree technique for which demons are famous (L' **ANTICRISTO** has a similar scene). It isn't until Emmett spots her in a notably seedy bar that the exorcism comes into play. "Hold her down!" orders Williams, who then puts on an African dashiki and takes out various items of religious paraphernalia — both Christian and Pagan. Williams calls upon Jehovah and Loran to exorcise the demon from the poor woman's ran-



Carol Speed is possessed by an African demon in William Girdler's **ABBY** (1974).



Canadian video box art from Jaun López Moctezuma's **ALUCARDA** (1975).

sacked body. In an explosion of spiritual energy the creature erupts from Abby and is imprisoned once again inside the aboriginal receptacle which Williams placed on the bar counter. Dazed but alive, Abby is happy to be back among her loved ones, and Williams returns to Nigeria to continue his studies.

The late director William Girdler was very active in the exploitation field for some time before his death in 1979 (he died in a helicopter accident). The concept of melding brooding Blackploitational epics with the new budding **EXORCIST** genre, and making a film as competent — and at times intelligent — as **ABBY** strikes me as both novel and audacious.

The following year was a lean twelve months for the Devil, when you consider that in the previous year there were ten possession/exorcism films. British director John Gilling lived in Spain for a while and made **LA CRUZ DEL DIABLO**/"The Cross of the Devil" wherein a man becomes obsessed with a woman and fears he has been possessed by a demon. The film is no longer available, and rumor has it that it was suppressed by Spanish unions in protest against Gilling working in Spain. The Brazilian film **SEDUZIDAS PELO DEMÔNIO**/"Women Seduced by the Devil" by Raffaele Rossi is another instance of reworking an old project to make a new product. The movie is a re-make of Rossi's own previous **O HOMEM-LOBO** (1968), about a young man who turns into a werewolf in a girl's boarding school. Rossi originally made this reputedly horrible picture for theatrical run, but it aired on Brazilian TV first. In the re-make the werewolf becomes a man possessed by the Devil, who attacks yet another reclusive boarding school. (So reclusive, in fact, that you have to take a 18th Century carriage to get there: Rossi lifted some footage from the 1967 Harald Reinl film **DIE SCHLANGENGURBE UND DAS PENDEL**/THE BLOOD DEMON where a horse-drawn coach is drive through a forest decorated with severed human limbs.) **SEDUZIDAS PELO DEMÔNIO** was eventually released upon the unsuspecting movie house masses which expected

a new **EXORCIST**-related flick. They were sorely disappointed. Today, Rossi is better known as the man responsible for introducing Brazil to hardcore porn films.

**ALUCARDA** is one of the rare instances in Mexican horror which doesn't feature a masked, wrestling do-gooder pinning monsters to the mats and fending off hordes of killer dwarves. On the contrary, what we are presented is an intelligently crafted story of two women seeking their individual sexuality. They must fight against society which is oddly structured within a devil-possession and crazy-nuns-on-the-loose film. Director Juan López Moctezuma may be better known to you as the producer of Alejandro Jodorowsky's classic psychedelic western **EL TOPO** (1972) as well as directing the equally bizarre **LA MANSIÓN DE LA LOCURA** ("The Mansion of Madness")/**DR. TARR'S TORTURE GARDEN** (1972) and the disappointing vampire film **MARY, MARY, BLOODY MARY** (1973) which starred an arthritic John Carradine as the blood-thirsty father of a half-human vampiress. This possession film is a production hip-deep in exotic locales (a dingy nunnery) and flaky characters (a six-foot tall hunchback with warts), and one wonders what happened to Moctezuma and what the man has been up to since making **ALUCARDA** (available on video as **INNOCENTS FROM HELL**).

When orphaned teenager Justine is sent to a convent she is warmly greeted by the sisters of that order. Things are not as they seem when the red-haired Justine rooms with the raven-haired Alucarda — the daughter of an unholy union between her deceased mother and the Devil. The two become fast friends and during one of their mischievous romps through the countryside Alucarda and her roommate encounter a giant hunchback who leeringly introduces them to his gypsy clan. After that odd encounter the two enter a mausoleum where both are possessed by a demon, possibly the same which impregnated Alucarda's mother. Later that day they disrupt a church gathering with chants of "Satan. Satan Our Lord and master. I promise thee I'll do as much evil as I can" and so forth. The nuns are horrified and call upon their local exorcist to remedy the problem.

Moctezuma carefully weaves the tale around the two girls in such a way that a person cannot help but get involved with the picture. The man's unique and quirky vision is amplified by beautiful, albeit disturbing, sequences. Soon after Alucarda and Justine are united as sexual sisters of the Devil, then run off to join the hunchback's Sabbath. There they strip down to the buff and begin the prance with the other naked witches in unholy rites. One of the nuns senses that Justine, her personal favorite among the orphans, is in spiritual distress and calls forth the wrath of God. While floating above the floor in her bare, cloistered compartment, our loving nun — blood oozing from her pores — transcendently blasts apart the practicing witches while the two orphans flee back to the convent. This scene in particular is well executed and is an unnerving prelude to Alucarda's own devilry. At the fiery climax of **ALUCARDA**, our dark-haired beauty psychically destroys the nunnery (beating Brian de Palma's **CARRIE** to the punch by one year) after clerics kill Justine during an unorthodox exorcism. A fantastic film which needs more attention than it has gotten.

Pre-dating **THE OMEN** by one year, yet borrowing heavily from **THE EXORCIST** and **ROSEMARY'S BABY**, Peter Sasdy's **I DON'T WANT TO BE BORN** isn't as absurd as it may sound. Released Stateside as **THE DEVIL WITHIN HER**, the film is not actually a "demon-possession" derivative in the sense that Satan himself is altercating for the immortal soul of a three-month old baby, but witchcraft is suggested — and thus, indirectly, the Devil is involved. The evil emanates from a bloated dwarf whose lustful attentions for a beautiful woman is spurned. An attractive, pre-super bitch Joan Collins is the recipient of the evil, and gives birth to a child which, according to her doctor, "didn't want to be born."

After recovering her strength our tentative mother sets about trying to care for her newborn. Things aren't what they seem as the child's rate of growth is out of control and within weeks the baby is almost the size of a one-year old. The infant has incredible strength and enjoys tearing up his room and spitting at his mother. Whenever the child's aunt (who is a nun, by the way) visits, he sets up a horrible howl. Small wonder since he is, of course, possessed. Told in flashback, former nightclub stripper Collins confesses to her sister (Caroline Monroe) that she rebuffed a lustful embrace by her dance partner, Hercules, a powerful and leering dwarf. After a bit of the old in and out with the nightclub's owner, Tommy, Collins is haunted by an angered Hercules who curses her: "You have within you a devil child. He will be as big as I am small!" Later on a trip to Italy she meets and marries her present husband (Ralph Bates) and they have the child. But whose kid is it? Does it belong to her husband, or Tommy, or, in some weird way, Hercules?

The child gets progressively violent, and at one point pulls a sitter's head under the water when she gives him a bath. Afterward, the same woman takes the little devil for a stroll around the park in a baby buggy. When she parks the carriage next to a pond, the dwarfish rogue pushes her into the water where she strikes her head on a rock and drowns. Later on he punches Tommy who comes over to look at the little tyke to see if it may be his. The situation deteriorates as the brat puts a mouse in another sitter's tea, murders his father (by hanging him from a tree!), decapitates a doctor (Donald Pleasence) with a shovel, and



Top: George Clayton as the possessive dwarf who menaces Joan Collins in Peter Sasdy's **I DON'T WANT TO BE BORN** (1975). Above: U.S. ad mat from the same film. Curiously enough, when it was released onto U.S. video it bore the original British title.

eventually hunts mom down throughout the flat and stabs her to death! It's up to Auntie Nun to exorcise the child. She attempts to hold down the hopping (!) infant while dodging flying toys and murderous blows from the tyke. Lastly she is able to pin the rascal down and administer the Rite of Exorcism. When the evil flees the baby (who then returns to normal), Hercules the dwarf stumbles, has a fit, and dies in the middle of a big musical number at Tommy's nightclub.

Sasdy's film is a far cry from his association with Hammer Studios (**TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA**, 1972; **COUNTESS DRACULA**, 1973; and **HANDS OF THE RIPPER**, 1974), but light years head of his present-day TV material (most recently an episode of *Thames' SHERLOCK HOLMES*: "Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady") and sports several bizarre visuals and downright offbeat sequences. The scene where the child slips the noose around the neck of his father and lifts the man off the ground to garrote him is unusual and disturbing. At this point in the film you want to know if it is actually the kid doing all of this mischief or could it be the sexually deviant and diabolic Hercules tormenting Collins' life. This sick attitude towards the physically impaired isn't new, nor has it abated, since these wicked pygmies still inhabit "nightmare" sequences in movies, on TV, and notably reside within Heavy Metal rock videos. No matter how ancient our social stigma is towards the physically disabled, and even though in these modern times bias plays an ugly part in developing stereotypical type-casting for good and evil, it does give these diminutive actors and actresses jobs.

**1** 1976 was the year of the Antichrist, and the introduction of Richard Donner's **THE OMEN** and its popular theme of the devil-child born to mortals and placed on the Earth to cause havoc. That film, together with **THE EXORCIST** and **ROSEMARY'S BABY**, along with liberal helpings from **CARRIE**, helped create more havoc. Not just was Satan stalking the earth to possess innocent women, but he was here to spread his seed and give rise to telepathically endowed bastard hybrids. The pure possession-cum-exorcism flick was soon to become a thing of the past; it's meteoric rise in popularity was to be eclipsed by its own stepchildren.

During 1976 there were a few films which touched on the possession subject without depending too much on what was popular for the day. Marcello Aliprandi's rarely seen ghost flick **UN SUSSURRO NEL BUIO** ("A Whisper In The Dark" borrowed more from **DON'T LOOK NOW** (1972, D: Nicolas Roeg) than **THE EXORCIST**, and **J.D.'S REVENGE** (D: Arthur Marks), a ghost/possession film set in an African-American urban setting. Quite the contrary can be said of the rest of that year's meager pickings. Eddy Matalon's **CAUCHEMARS/CATHY'S CURSE**, and Elo Pannaciò's **UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE/THE POSSESSOR**, are the two that clearly come to mind.

Eddy Matalon's Canadian/French production company added another motif to the already crowded arena of devil-spawned beings: the devil doll in **CAUCHEMARS**. This ghostly possession film asks the question: If your daughter found a strange doll which has its eyes sewn shut in an old dusty attic would you let her keep it? Matalon could have had a decent horror vehicle here if he had half a mind to do some directing. Everything is handled in a flat and emotionless style, keeping any suspense from developing and possibly cluing us in on why the doll wants to kill people. The plot winds hither and beyond as a young child, Cathy (proof positive that there are children uglier than Marian Salgado who starred as Susan in **EL PODER DE LAS TINIEBLAS**), discovers a bizarre rag doll in the attic of her new home. The creature is possessed by the

mean-spirited ghost of a little girl who was killed in a fiery car crash with her abusive father. Once Cathy has the effigy in her arms she too becomes possessed by the ghost. The tyke terrorizes the community when she attempts to poke out the eyes of one little girl with a rusty nail, then sends her maid crashing through the second story window. The screaming woman impacts on the tarmac in front of Cathy's distraught and emotionally screwed-up mother. Making matters worse the child frightens the town psychic and tears the face off the family gardener. Cathy then corners her mother in the kitchen with a butcher knife and begins to make mincemeat out of her. Luckily for the both of them the girl's father grabs the possessed doll and tears the critter's eyelids off. For some reason the ghost of the dead girl is appeased and the haunting comes to an end.

Not exactly an **EXORCIST** rip-off plotwise, **CAUCHEMARS** does borrow heavily in the motif-thick field of "atmospheric" special effects. Cathy spits curses with her foul breath in the typical possessed child way ("You old bag," she addresses the psychic in the hollow voice possessed people acquire, "you'll burn in hell if you don't get out of here!"). The doll itself does a 180 degree head spin and floats around the house.

Sadly, despite all of **CAUCHEMARS**'s low-budget charms, this was the year when the last faithful **EXORCIST** rip-off was made, and as films of this ilk go, **UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE** is very appealing. Director Elo Pannaciò didn't have much to work with, considering he was utilizing dated material. Having the antagonist's sister being a nun is an added taboo. Placing nuns in demonic peril is a popular motif in horror films (see **I DON'T WANT TO BE BORN**, for example), as it added another dimension explored earlier in Brunello Rondi's critically acclaimed **IL DEMONIO** (1965, an intellectual's possession film) and Ken Russell's **THE DEVILS** (1971, a "false" possession film) and later in the infamous Italian nuns-amok film **IL ALTRO INFERNO/THE OTHER HELL** (1981, D: Bruno Mattei). Even making the sister a beautiful nun added just enough sexual frustration and guilt to keep the plot moving.

The film begins with a weird opening sequence wherein a crowd of on-lookers in St. Peter's Square listen to the Pope's plea for exorcising the devil from their souls, shots of a possessed Peter screaming, and flashes of some ambiguous Black Mass. These highly charged visual juxtapositions are effective, but not as punchy as the tasty dialogue between the possessed and those around him. Rivalling **MAGDALENA** with its roll of heretical utterances, the spicy banter in **UN**

**URLO NELLE TENEBRE** is definitely the highlight, and sets the film up in a delirious and blasphemous timbre.

Peter is a pleasant young man (a welcome change from the innocent females) who is deeply religious and loves nature. While out on a field trip with friends he is possessed by a devil when he accidentally photographs an auburn-maned she-demon taking a bath at a waterfall. Despite his sanctimonious up-bringing, Peter is a hot-blooded Italian who, like anyone with a libido, drools at his unsuspecting model. After the woman mysteriously vanishes Peter finds a strange talisman in the stream. He pockets the charm not knowing that later when he drills a hole through it and puts it on a chain around his neck, the evil within it will soon burn a pentagram on his chest. At this point the audience is sufficiently clued in that Peter is in for a load of trouble; such evil icons have popped up for decades in films. From the time the priest discovers a devil fetish at a dig to when Regan began to make weird animals out of clay in **THE EXORCIST**, this motif was reinforced in almost every clone made thereafter: **O EXORCISMO NEGRO**, **CAUCHEMARS**, **IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO**, **L'OSSESSA**, **ABBY**, **EL PODER DE LAS TINIEBLAS**,



U.S. Video box art of the last true Italian **EXORCIST** rip-off, Elo Pannaciò's lyrical **UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE** (1976).



Spanish poster from another "lost" possession film, Giulio Petroni's *L'OSCENO DESIDERIO* (1977).

etc. As the diabolic possession unfolds, our victim's unflattering first act of devilry occurs at a party. There he shakes a bottle of champagne, pops its cork, and sprays the foam all over his chaste girlfriend's new dress. He also curses at his mother and is spiteful to his sister, Elaina, the family nun. From then on, it's Hell on Earth for his entire kin. He is repeatedly visited by the red-haired demoness, stares menacingly at his family, and spits as well. Adding insult to injury he kills his girlfriend at a disco, rapes his mother (in the form of the demon: "Don't resist it! You love it you lecherous sow!") and kills her by pushing her down the stairs. As he did with his mother Peter visits his sister in the shape of the she-demon. The creature crawls into Elaina's bed and ravishes the frightened nun ("Come! Come, you bitch in heat! Your virginity is mine!!"). Sensing that things are by no means normal, his surviving sibling calls in a priest.

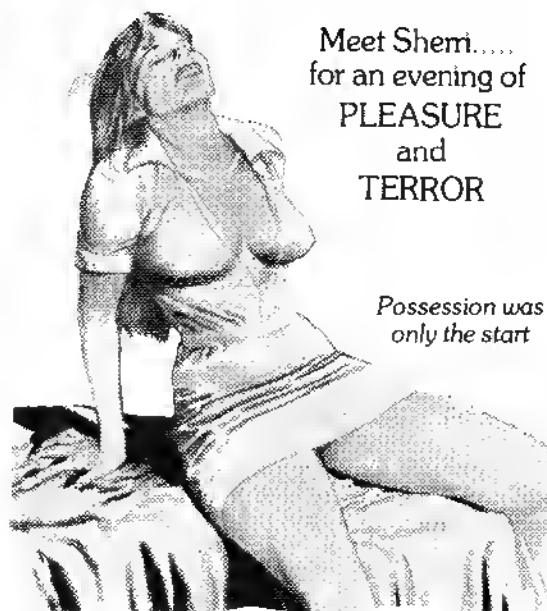
A priest (Richard Conte, co-star of Richard Quine's *HOTEL*, 1967, and Coppola's *THE GODFATHER*, 1972, in one of his last roles) upon hearing of this horror from Elaina, bones up on all the information he can find about the demoness. The monster possessing the boy comes from 1723 when a witch at that time period is causing all sort of mischief. The red-haired beauty was running all over Italy seducing virginal men and women and exposing them to Satanism, and corrupting their souls. The exorcist is greeted by an obnoxious Peter as he approaches the house of the possessed ("Accursed interferer, go away! Go away!" screams Peter from his bed room window). The cleric and demon confront each other and Peter lets out a barrage of great one-liners. "I cannot stand the putrid stench of your garments! Go away!" To his whimpering sister he declares: "And you, you whore, don't ask that eunuch for help! You carrion bitch. Get out!" Soon after the exorcism is under way, our demon continues his slurs: "Stop! Stop! You fool. You enemy of life. Blind prophet of ignorance. I will never leave, you whoremonger! Traitor. Coward. You human excrement. Pox-tainted whore's son. Go away, lecherous swine!" One wonders

if these are direct translations from the Italian, or if the dubbers had a liberal voice in the matter.

At this point Elania takes it upon herself to approach her brother and declare her love for him. The devil within Peter strikes back: "Carrier of death, I am invincible! You know it, you know I am! Off with your mask and show yourself! Show what you really are!" The exorcist hesitates then continues the rite while the possessed spits insults for the final time: "There are no words to describe the crimes you commit on men! Stop appealing to fools and weaklings! You and I are the same!" Suddenly Peter coughs up at least a gallon of purplish-green vomit, and smoke pours from his mouth. The mark of Satan vanishes and the demoness vacates his body. Good has triumphed — or so we believe. Sister Elania takes a breather in her bedroom only to discover, painfully, that the brand of Satan has appeared, between her breasts. She takes it upon herself to purge the world of this evil and jumps off a cliff and plunges to her death into a shallow stream. However (one more twist, folks) a young boy (again) discovers the amulet in the creek and runs off with it.

UNURLO NELLE TENEBRE occasionally bristles with energy, and there are, unquestionably, very effective sequences throughout, but their sparsity only tends to frustrate the viewer. One particular item is the reoccurring "mondo" footage of an insane asylum which pops up every time Sister Elaina frets about her brother's condition. This scratchy, cinema verité footage depicts screaming female inmates beating each other, tearing their clothes off, and being "attended to" (whipped more like it) by their care-takers. Either Elo is equating spiritual possession with the mentally deranged, or he is making some weird statement that the mentally ill are souls possessed by actual demons and all they need is a good exorcism! One high note is the spacey, 70's Euro-rock soundtrack by composer Giuliano Sorgini. His use of spitting guitar, careening electric organ, and thumping bass reminds a person of a half-crooked *GOBLIN* (*SUSPIRIA*, *DAWN OF THE DEAD*, etc.) during a sloppy mic set.

**1977:** *STAR WARS* and *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* broke the box offices and a multitude of takeoffs followed suit (again, the Italians rose to the occasion and Luigi Cozzi [= Lewis Coates] and Alfonso Brescia [= Al Brady] figure as two key names in this genre), and Hollywood coughed up its first "official" self-exploitive sequel to *THE EXORCIST*. *EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC* was made three years and at least fifteen imitations after



## NURSE SHERRI

Seductive ad mat from Al Adamson's *NURSE SHERRI* (1977).

the fact. Although certainly a sloppy film, this John (ZARDOZ, 1971; EXCALIBUR, 1981) Boorman production did try to approach the subject differently. Calling in an African witch doctor (James Earl Jones) to squash an African-variation of the demon re-possessing Linda Blair (eleven years before her woeful appearance in Bob Logan's REPOSSESSED), the exotic locales and proceeding exorcism did, for the most part, keep your attention, no matter how often you giggled during the film. Curtis Harrington's ghost-possession effort RUBY is fun if not flawed (a drive-in favorite, this film is, sadly, only available on video in a seriously edited TV print). The silly US made-for-TV clone THE POSSESSED (D: Jerry Thorpe, who also directed television's KUNG FU, 1971, and SMILE JENNY, YOU'RE DEAD, 1974, the pilot for David Janssen's HARRY O series) popped up starring James Farentino as a priest investigating a fire at a boarding school. Then there's Giulio Petroni's obscure L'OSCENO DESIDERIO/"The Obscene Desire" which is another in the series of "lost"

films which has yet to turn up on video. The film is a sexual-demon-possession film from the man better known for his fantastic 1967 Western DA UOMO A UOMO/DEATH RIDES A HORSE. A Spanish-Italian co-production, Petroni weaves a tale of a pregnant woman in Rome helped by a group of Satanists who believe that her baby was sired by the devil.

Aside from Robert Wise's artfully crafted ghost/reincarnation film AUDREY ROSE, and the Alberto De Martino's tale of the anti-Christ-cum-THE OMEN production HOLOCAUST 2000/THE CHOSEN, little else resembled what was so popular just a few years past. However, whereas William Girdler was able

to successfully coalesce the African-American experience with ABBY in 1974, THE MANITOU is a less-than-exciting, chock-full-of-stars approach which hardly says anything for the mythology of the Native-American. True, there are scant semi-truthful references to cosmic American demons in this flimsy tale, but the undeniable point of attack was Girdler's obsession for possessions. Here he attempts to fuse demonic possession with demonic impregnation. The result is an embarrassing mess which seldom rises above parody. Had he spent more time with the script and less with wooing big-name has-been stars, THE MANITOU (which wasn't that bad of a book) could have been original and entertaining.

Bogus clairvoyant (Tony Curtis, has-been actor #1) comes face to face with an authentic demonic situation when his girlfriend (Susan Strasberg, recognized name #2) has the fetus of a long dead Indian Medicine Man growing on her spinal cord. Terrified that the spontaneous growth will soon consume her, and suspecting the supernatural, he attempts to contact the spirit via a "kosher" spiritualist (Stella Stevens, noted low-rent actress #3). During a seance it is made known that the spirit possessing the woman is a four-hundred-year-old witch doctor. Curtis then contacts a crusty anthropologist (gruff old star #4, Burgess Meredith in his post-BATMAN/pre-ROCKY days) who informs him that it is indeed an Indian demon probably bent on reincarnating himself. When a doctor at the hospital attempts to remove the fetus via a laser the baby strikes out, wounding him in the hand. Curtis determines that there is just one thing to do: "fight fire with fire" and employ a modern-day Medicine Man to combat the ancient entity. After a lot of "authentic" Indian bravado on the part of actor Michael Ansara (vet #5) and "there isn't such a thing as magic" staunchness from a hospital administrator, the witch doctor is reborn. Of course, all hell breaks loose and there are scenes of bloodshed and levitating objects, but what ruins the

film, and keeps it from being anything but trite, is the time-worn ending that love conquerors all. Just when the deformed (stunted by x-ray exposure in the hospital) monster is about to conjure up the mother-of-all-demons, the creator of all, etc., etc. to blast the White man and his corrupt civilization, his surrogate mother/host bolts up in her hospital bed and blasts him with love. How's that for the comiest ending to any possession film ever made?

What Girdler had in mind was an end-all cosmic battle which pitted the modern white world against the ancient red one. It didn't work — and not just because of the racist attitude that white is right, but the effects were bad and most of the time the acting was an embarrassment.

Another American, Al Adamson is known for his hodge-podge projects: the poverty-row piece-meal horror production BRAIN OF BLOOD (1971), his western THE GUN RIDERS (1969), and BLOOD OF DRACULA'S CASTLE (1967). Famous Monsters war-babies may readily recall (and none too fondly) his

work DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN (1971), in which FM's editor Forrest J. Ackerman had a cameo. Adamson isn't a great director but he has a nose for exploitive material. Each idea, whether original or "borrowed," he would manipulate to its fullest, depending on how far he could stretch his budget — which never was very much to begin with. Even THE EXORCIST wasn't safe. NURSE SHERRI is his homage to the possession cycle, and, as with many of his other projects, this film is probably better known under other (mostly video) titles: HOSPITAL OF TERROR, BEYOND THE LIVING, KILLER'S CURSE, HANDS OF DEATH,



*YIKES! When NURSE SHERRI gets possessed be careful not to lose your head over it!*

and TERROR HOSPITAL.

The evil spirit of a mad man possesses the amble body of Nurse Sherri and takes revenge on those whom he hated while living. Through various methods of extermination, Sherri and the ghost whittle down the cast until she comes at her boyfriend with cleavers in hand! If it isn't for the swift thinking of her two nurse-roommates who dig up and incinerate the corpse of the possessor, then Sherri would have minced her lover as well. NURSE SHERRI comes through with flying colors despite what you might think. Adamson's direction is tight and the script holds up well under the circumstances. It is not an instance of "so bad it's good", but rather "hey, it was better than I imagined." The final minutes top the film as Sherri snaps out of her possession. The town police inspector and the boyfriend both agree that the babbling young woman was taken over by the ghost and not responsible for the murders she committed under his spell. But, because no one else would believe their story Sherri will be committed to an institution for the criminally insane, although both men know that she isn't crazy. Nice twist there, and a real downer for the audience.

One final note: no doubt hard-pressed for cash Adamson acquired a canned soundtrack which included the title track from TV's ONE STEP BEYOND (Harry Lubin) and incidental themes from THE OUTER LIMITS (Dominic Frontiere). While readily recognizable to most SF fans, the most effective use of Frontiere's score is during the initial, sleazy possession. In what is possibly Adamson's most atmospherically-shot scene, Sherri is lying on her bed wearing nothing but a nightgown when the leering ghost invades her soul. As the music builds her negligee is supernaturally hitched higher and higher around her thighs and her legs are forced apart for the unearthly violation.

Before I close this exploration of 70's post-EXORCIST films, I would like to point out a movie which is, if you are as fascinated by the subject as I truly am,



a wonder to behold. In searching for material, I was sent a video of Turkish origin. Maybe the correct way of describing it is that this movie is a true counterfeit of Friedkin's film. A doppelganger, if you care to take it further. Unlike **ABBY** or **UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE** which were heavily inspired by the '73 film, **SEYTAN** ("Satan" (D: Metin Erksan) steals scene per scene (and I am not making this up!) — and possibly word for word — almost every important and non-important aspect of **THE EXORCIST** right down to similar camera angles and, of course, Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" score. The difference is, considering that Turkey is predominately an Islamic country, the demon and the clerics are Islamic. The will of Allah and the powerful words of the prophet Muhammad are summoned to dispel the demon from the Linda Blair look-alike. And, you know what, this film is *much* more entertaining than Friedkin's project. It looks like an Italian clone, but takes the daring (and illegal!) step toward total and complete absorption of the original's plot, taking **THE EXORCIST** and making it tolerable.

**T**he 70's wound down with **DAMIEN - OMEN II** (1978, D: Don Taylor), John Carpenter's masterful possession/stalker **HALLOWEEN** (1978), Norman J. Warren's witch's curse causing **TERROR** (1978), Ian Coughlan's equally wacky **ALISON'S BIRTHDAY** (1979), and pathetically popular **THE AMITYVILLE HORROR** (1979, D: Stuart Rosenberg). Each of those films had a little bit of **THE EXORCIST** in them, but none were specialized enough to be considered a clone. From here on out the idea of the Devil or a demon possessing an individual became commonplace, and already a dated cinematic cliché.

Stretching into the 80's and 90's filmmakers had little recourse but to look behind themselves for inspiration. Horror films of today are rare and at times often imitations of the Italian giallos from the 60's, 70's, and 80's, disguised as

"psycho-thrillers". You can count the number of true-blue monster flicks released theatrically in the 90's on one hand. Oddball films like Sam Raimi's **ARMY OF DARKNESS** (1993) cannot be considered a real horror film, which, although jammed-packed with monsters, is nevertheless a slap-stick comedy. Making a monster film today is a shattered reality, where "originality" is taking the old and reworking it until it's truly dull. Few such re-workings have any merit. John Carpenter's **THE THING** (1982) is one of the last truly classic monster films of the 80's, borrowing more from the short story than the original 1954 film. Nothing very significant was produced which was as powerful a genre-jolt to the cinematic psyche as **THE EXORCIST**. One can argue that George Romero's **DAWN OF THE DEAD** (1979) sparked a mini-boom of walking-dead productions (which the Italians gleefully still exploit — see **DÈMONI 3** on page 60), and that **ALIEN** (1979, D: Ridley Scott), **ALIENS** (1986, D: James Cameron), and **TERMINATOR 2: JUDGMENT DAY** (1991, D: James Cameron) contributed heavily to the re-birth of mega-bucks Science Fiction monster fests (to be followed by, again, a delightful hoard of worldwide replicants), there are still remnants of the religious fear and frustration which made possession films rampant. **EXORCIST III** (1992, D: William Bluntley, while not really following the sequel fad, is no less a very good film and actually has some traditional exorcism in it) and **REPOSSESSED** made it apparent that this trend is now dead if followed in its truest form. Exorcism and possession cannot be the central plot of a film anymore, it is too "old fashioned" nowadays to be able to pull in an audience — unless the priest packs an uzi and the possessed female is a body-building, ultra-feminist, tough-as-nails adversary. The chilling sanctimonious sacrilege is gone, replaced by the tired carnage of slash and burn action flicks and silly psycho-dramas. More's the pity.

# THE DEVIL'S FILMOGRAPHY

## SUPERNATURAL

USA, 1933. p co-Paramount Pictures Corp. d- Victor Halperin. sc- Harvey Thew & Brian Marlowe. story- Garnett Weston. ph- Arthur Martinelli. art d- Hans Dreier. dial d- Sidney Salkow. p- Victor & Edward Halperin. cast- Carole Lombard, Randolph Scott, Vivienne Osborne, Alan Dinehart, H.B. Warner, Beryl Mercer, William Farnum, Willard Robertson, George Burr McAnnan, Lyman Williams. rt- 60 min. US dist- Paramount.

## THE DYBUK

US 1 - THE DYBUK Poland, 1937. p co- Feniks. d- Michael Waszynski. sc- Alter Kokynski, Anderej Marek. based on the original play *The Dybuk* by S. Ansky. adaptation- A. Stern. ph- A. Wywerka. art d- Anderej Marek. set dec- Rotmil & Norris. historical advisor- Majer Balaban. m- A. Kon. cantonal m- Gershon Sirota. cam- L. Zajaczowski. choreo- Judith Berg. cast- Abraham Morewski, A. Samberg, M. Lipman, Lili Luniana, Diana Halpern, G. Lemberger, L. Liebgold, M. Bozyk, S. Landau, S. Bronecki, M. Messinger, Z. Katz, A. Kurtz, D. Lenderman. restored rt- 123 min. US dist- National Center for Jewish Film Library.

## THE LADY AND THE MONSTER

re-release 1- THE TIGER MAN. USA, 1944. p co- Republic Pictures. d/assoc p- George Sherman. sc- Frederick Kohner & Dane Lussier. based on the novel *Donovan's Brain* by Curt Siodmak. ph- John Alton. art d- Russell Kimball. sp fx- Theodore Lydecker. ed- Arthur Roberts. m- Waller Scharf. cast- Erich von Stroheim, Vera Hruba Ralston, Richard Arlen, Sidney Blackmer, Helen Vinson, Mary Nash, Lola Montez, Juanita Quigley. rt- 86 min.

## L'ANTICRISTO

US 1- THE TEMPTER. exp/GB 1- THE ANTICHRIST. Italy, 1974. p co- Capitoline Produzioni Cinematografiche. d- Alberto De Martino. sc- Alberto De Martino & Vincenzo Mannino. story- Gianfranco Clerici, Alberto De Martino & Vincenzo Mannino. ph- Aristide Massaccesi. sp ph fx- Blamonte Cinegroup. art d- Umberto Bertacca. ed- Vincenzo Tommassi. m- Ennio Morricone. p- Edmondo Amati. cast- Carla Gravina, Mel Ferrer, Arthur Kennedy, George Coulouris, Alida Valli, Anita Strindberg, Umberto Orsini, Mario Scaccia, Ernesto Colli, Remo Girone. Eastmancolor. rt- 112 min. US dist- Avco-Embassy (1976). US video dist- Embassy.



L'ANTICRISTO (1974)

## CHI SEI?

US t- BEYOND THE DOOR. GB t- THE DEVIL WITHIN HER. trade t- WHO? Italy, 1974. p co- A-Erre Cinematografica. d- Oliver Hellman [= Sonia Molteni Assonitis] & Richard Barrett [= Roberto d'Ettore Piazzoli]. sc- Sonia Molteni Assonitis, Antonio Troisio, Giorgio Marini, Aldo Crudo & Roberto d'Ettore Piazzoli. ph- Roberto d'Ettore Piazzoli. art d- Piero Filippone & Franco Pellechia Velchi. sp fx- Donn Davison & Wally Gentleman. ed- Angelo Curi. m- Franco Micalizzi. sd mix- Bruno Brunacci. sd fx- Roberto Arcangeli. as d/2nd unit d- Luciano Palermo. p- Ovidio Assonitis & Giorgio C. Rossi. cast- Juliet Mills, Richard Johnson, Gabriele Lavia, Nino Segurini, Elizabeth Turner, David Curtis, Barbara Fiorini, Carla Mancini, David Colin Jr. Widescreen, Eastmancolor. rt- 110 min. US dist- Film Ventures International.

## L'OSSESSA

US t- THE EERIE MIDNIGHT HORROR SHOW. GB t- THE SEXORCIST. Italy, 1974. p co- Tiberia Film International. d/ story- Mario Gariazzo. sc- Ambrogio Molteni. ph- Carlo Carlini. sp fx- Paolo Ricci. ed- Roberto Colangeli. m- Marcello Giombini. p- Riccardo Romano & Paolo Azzoni. cast- Stella Camacina, Chris Avram, Lucretia Love, Gabriele Tinti, Luigi Pistilli, Gianrico Rondinelli, Umberto Raho, Giuseppe Addobbati, Piero Guerini, Ivan Rassimov, Elisa Mantellini. Widescreen, Eastmancolor. rt- 88 min.

## IL MEDAGLIONE INSANGUINATO

alt t- PERCHÉ? US t- NIGHT CHILD. US TV t- THE CURSED MEDALLION. Italy, 1974. p co- Magdalena Produzione/Italian International Films. d- Massimo Dallamano. sc- Franco Marotta, Massimo Dallamano & Laura Toscano. ph- Franco Delli Colli. ed- Antonio Siciliano. m- Stelvio Cipriani. p- William C. Reich & Fulvio Lucisano. cast- Richard Johnson, Joanna Cassidy, Evelyn Stewart [= Ida Galli], Nicoletta Elmi, Edmund Purdom, Riccardo Garrone, Dana Ghia, Eleonora Morana, Lila Kedrova. Widescreen, Eastmancolor. rt- 95 min. US dist- Avco Embassy. US video dist- Embassy.

## EL PODER DE LAS TINIEBLAS

alt Spanish t- LA ENDEMONIADA. US t- DEMON WITCH CHILD. export t/US video t- THE POSSESSED. Spain, 1974. p co- Richard Films. d/sc- Amando de Ossorio. ph- Vicente Minaya. art d- Fernando González. sp fx- Pablo Pérez. sp makeup fx- Ramón de Diego. ed- Pedro del Rey. m- Victor & Diego. sd- Antonio Alonso. cost- Agustín Jiménez. as d- Francisco Rodríguez. p- Isaac Hernández. exec p- Julio Vallejo. cast- Julián Mateos, Marian Salgado, Fernando Sancho, Ángel del Pozo, Roberto Camardiel, Tota Alba, Maria Kostí, Kali Hansa, Daniel Martín, Fernando Hilbeck. Eastmancolor. rt- 87 min. US dist- Coliseum.

## EXORCISMO

US video t- EXORCISM. Spain, 1974. p co- Profilmes. d- Juan Bosch. sc- Jacinto Molina & Juan Bosch. story- Jacinto Molina. ph- Francisco Sanchez. art d- Alfonso de Lucas. ed- Antonio Ramírez. m- Alberto Argudo. cast- Paul Naschy [= Jacinto Molina], Maria Perschy, Maria Kostí, Grace Mills, Roger Leveder, Juan Llaneras, Marta Avilé. Widescreen, Gevacolor. rt- 98 min.

## MAGDALENA - VOM TEUFEL BESESSEN

US t- BEYOND THE DARKNESS. GB t- MAGDALENA. POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL. Germany, 1974. p co- TV 13. d- Michael Walter. sc- Jean Christian Auvive. makeup- Hedy Dolensky. ed- Karl Aulitzky. sd- Günther Stadelmann. art d- Peter Rothe. cost- Lilo Nobauer. cm- Ernst W. Kalinke. m- Hans M. Majewski. p- Josef Hadrawa. cast- Dagmar Hidrich, Werner Bruhns, Michael Hinz, Peter Martin Urtel, Rudolf Schundler, Karl Walter Diess, Günter Clemens, Elisabeth Volkmann, Eva Kinsky. rt- 84.

## LES POSSEDÉES DU DIABLE

alt French t- LORNA L'EXORCISTE; LES POSSEDÉES DU DÉMON. France, 1974. p co- Comptoir Français du Film. d/sc- Clifford Brown [= Jesús Franco]. ph- Robert de Nesle. cast- Lina Romay, Pamela Stanford, Guy Delorme, Jacqueline Parent, Howard Vernon, Jesús Franco. Color. rt- 90 min.

## EXORCISMO NEGRO

See page 28 in the MII dossier on José Mojica Marins.

## ABBY

USA, 1974. p co- Mid-America Pictures/AIP. d- William



CHI SEI? (1974)

Girdler. sc- Gordon Cornell Layne. story- William Girdler & Gordon Cornell Layne. ph- William Asman. p des- J. Patrick Kelly III. set dec- Barbara Peter. sp fx- Sam Price. ed- Corky Ehlers & Henry Asman. m- Robert O. Ragland. sd- John Asman & Chuck Hallam. makeup- Joe Kenney. as d- Hugh Smith. p- William Girdler, Mike Henry & Gordon Cornell Layne. cast- Carol Speed, William Marshall, Terry Carter, Austin Stoker, Juanita Moore, Charles Kissinger, Elliott Moffitt, Nathan Cook, Bob Holt (voice). Color. rt- 89 min.

## ALUCARDA, LA HIJA DE LAS TINIEBLAS

US video t- SISTERS OF SATAN; INNOCENTS FROM HELL. Mexico, 1975. p co- Films 75/Yuma Films. d- Juan López Moctezuma. sc- Juan López Moctezuma, Yolanda Moctezuma & Alexis T. Arroyo. ph- Xavier Cruz. art d- Kleomenes Stematides. sp fx- Abel Contreras. ed- Max Sánchez & Jorge Peña. sd- Francisco Guerrero. sd mix- Ricardo Saldívar. sd fx- Gonzalo Gavira. makeup- A. Ramírez del Río. p mgr- Antonio Rodríguez. as d- Ralael Villaseñor. p- Eduardo Moreno & Max Guefen. cast- Tina Romero, Susana Kamini, Claudio Brook, David Silva, Adriana Roel, Betty Catania, Lily Garza, Martín Lasalle. Eastmancolor. rt- 90 min.

## I DON'T WANT TO BE BORN

GB re-release t- THE MONSTER. US t- THE DEVIL WITHIN HER. prod t- THE BABY. advertised(?) t- SHARON'S BABY. Great Britain, 1975. p co- Prizebourne/Unicapital. d- Peter Sasdy. sc- Stanley Price. story/exec p- Nato de Angelis. ph- Kenneth Talbot. art d- Roy Stannard. sp fx- Bert Luxford. makeup- Eddie Knight. ed- Keith Palmer. m- Ron Grainer. p- Norma Corney. cast- Joan Collins, Eileen Atkins, Donald Pleasence, Ralph Bates, Caroline Munro, Hilary Mason, John Steiner, Janet Key, George Claydon, Hilary Mag. Eastmancolor. rt- 94 min. US dist- AIP (1976).

## CAUCHEMARS

GB/US video t- CATHY'S CURSE. France/Canada, 1976 p co- Makifilms/Les Productions Agora. d- Eddy Matalon. sc- Eddy Matalon, Alain Sens-Carenave & Myra Clément. ph- Jean-Jacques Tarbes & Richard Cuipka. sp fx- Eurocité. ed- Laurent Quaglio, Pierre Rose & Micheline Thouin. m- Didier Vasseur. makeup- Julia Grundy. p- Nicole Mathieu Boisvert. cast- Alan Scarfe, Randi Allen, Beverly Murray, Roy Witham, Linda Koot, Mary Porter, Dorothy Davis, Peter McNeill. Color. rt- 91 min. US dist- 21st Century (1980).

## UN URLO NELLE TENEBRE

prod t- L'ESORCISTA 2. US t- NAKED EXORCISM. US Video

t- THE POSSESSOR Italy, 1976. p co- Colosseum International/Manila Cinematografica. d- Elio Pannaciò. sc- Aldo Crudo, Franco Brocani & Elio Pannaciò. st- Giulio Albonico. ph- Franco Villa & Maurizio Centini. ed- Fernanda Papa. m- Giuliano Sorgini. p- Luigi Fedeli. cast- Richard Conte, Françoise Prévost, Elena Svevo, Patrizia Gori, Jean-Claude Varné, Mimma Monticelli. Widescreen, Technicolor. rt- 90 min.

## L'OSCENO DESIDERIO

Spanish t- POSEÍDA. alt Italian t- LE PENE NEL VENTRE. Italian prod t- LA PROFEZIA. Italy/Spain, 1977. p co- Cineinziative/Titan PCC-Altamira. d- Jeremy Scott [= Giulio Petroni]. sc- Giulio Petroni & Piero Regnoli. ph- Fausto Rossi & Leopoldo Villaseñor. ed- Marcella Benvenuti. m- Carlo Savina. cast- Marisa Mell, Lou Castel, Chris Avram, Victor Israel, Laura Trotter, Javier Escrivá, Jack Taylor, Paola Majolini. Panavision, Eastmancolor. rt- 97 min.

## THE MANITOU

USA, 1977. p co- Avco Embassy/Enterprise. d/p- William Girdler. sc- William Girdler, Jon Cedar & Thomas Pope. based on the novel by Graham Masterton. ph- Michael Hugo. sp ph fx- Dale Tate & Frank Van Der Veer. p des- Walter Scott Herndon. conceptual design/2nd unit d- Nikita Knatz. sp fx- Gene Grigg & Tim Smythe. sp makeup fx- Tom Burman. ed- Gene Ruggiero & Bub Asman. m- Lalo Schiffrin. makeup- Joe McKinney. sd fx- Fred Brown & Michelle Sharp-Brown. exec p- Melvin G. Gordy. cast- Tony Curtis, Susan Strasberg, Michael Ansara, Jon Cedar, Stella Stevens, Ann Sothern, Burgess Meredith, Paul Mantee, Jeanette Nolan, Lurene Tuttle, Felix Silla, Joe Gieb. Widescreen, color. rt- 105 min.

## NURSE SHERRI

US, 1977. p co-dist- Independent-International. d- Al Adamson. sc- Michael Bockman, Gregg Tittinger. idea- Al Adamson. ph- Roger Michaels. sp ph fx- Optical Systems Unlimited. makeup- Tom Schwartz. art d- Ann McDonald. set dec- Joe Arrowsmith. ed- Michael Bockman, Gregg Tittinger. sd- Robert Dietz. as d- Adam Roberts. script sup- Michael Bockman. p- Mark Sherwood. cast- Jill Jacobson, Geoffrey Land, Marilyn Joi, Mary Kay Pass, Prentiss Moulden, Erwin Fuller, Clayton Foster, Caryl Briscoe, Jack Barnes, Bill Roy. Eastmancolor. rt- 88 min.

## SEYATAN

Turkey, circa 1975. p co- Saner Video. d- Metin Erksan. sc- Yilmaz Tümerörk. p- Hülki Saner. cast- Cihan Ünal, Canan Perver, Meral Taygun, Agah Hün. rt- 101 min.

# SPY IN THE SKY

## ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS

Each decade in recent American history has been classified by some significant cultural trend. The 80's was the "Me-Decade," the 70's shaped by the booty-shaking mindlessness of Disco, and the 60's — Hippies and Beatles notwithstanding — was the decade of the Superspy. Single-handedly created, and primarily fueled by, the incredible world-wide success of the James Bond movies, the phenomenon reached its peak with the release of **THUNDERBALL** (1965, D: Terrance Young). The following year American theatres were buried in an avalanche of foreign-produced imitators.

While the superspy formal, with its A-Bomb, death-rays, and space-age world conquest scenarios, are easily recognized as an energetic cousin to science fiction, few injected overtly horrific elements into their plotlines. **AGENTS FOR H.A.R.M.** (1966, D: Gerd Oswald, who directed the classic **OUTER LIMITS** episodes "Forms Of Things Unknown," "Don't Open Till Doomsday," "The Chameleon" and others) pit good-guy Mark Richman against unreconstructed Nazi Martin Kosleck for possession of a flesh devouring space fungus (oddly enough, Kosleck played a crazed marine biologist who possessed flesh eating microbes in Jack Curtis' 1964 horror film **THE FLESH EATERS**). Antonio Margheri's **OPERAZIONE GOLDMAN/LIGHTNING BOLT** (1967) is highlighted by the grisly disintegration of the villain's cryogenically frozen prisoners, made particularly effective through the use of colorful, Bava-styled lighting.

But leave it to Jesús Franco — along with screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière — to go whole hog in mashing the two genres together. Who else would combine plot elements of **THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE** (1962, D: John Frankenheimer) and **THE CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN** (1955, D: Edward L. Cahn) for a send-up of the secret agent craze?

The result **CARTES SUR TABLE/ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** (1966), is a typically frustrating Franco film; a crappy-looking production peppered with moments of undeniable beauty, energized primarily by its headlong rush to reach a climax.

Strangely robotic, dark-skinned men in glasses are performing a series of daring political assassinations across Europe, under the guidance of a mysterious criminal organization. Following the massacre of the entire Council of Ministers (filmed in an effective cinema vérité style), the police finally capture one of the killers, but they can't snap him out of a weird catatonic state. But when one of the officers thoughtfully replaces his glasses, the man suddenly tries to escape. Shot down in the hall, he shockingly turns chalky white!

Eventually, Interpol discovers a connection between the assassins: they all share a rare blood type, RH Zero. Correlating reports of all missing persons with the same RH factor, they pinpoint Alacante, a town on the coast of Spain, as the likely center of zombie operations. Desperate to crash the command center, Interpol decides to send one of their agents with the same blood type to Alacante as a clay pigeon, hoping his capture will lead them to criminal head quarters. Only one man fits the profile, a retired agent named Al Peterson (Eddie Constantine, who, sad to report, died earlier this year).

Peterson is enjoying the exotic highlife of nightclubs and casinos in the Far East. Before his old bosses can contact him, Peterson is approached by another interested party. Lured through a moonlight garden by a talking statue ("Hey, I hear voices. Just like Joan of Arc!"), he gets conked on the head and taken to a giggling Chinese spymaster named Li Wi.

Li Wi seems unusually interested in Peterson's blood type, his current affiliations, and in dark-skinned men who wear glasses. He offers Peterson \$100,000 to travel to Spain and obtain an unspecified scientific process. Rather than sell out to a lousy bunch of Reds, Peterson fights his way past the guards and returns to his hotel. In his room, he's confronted by his old Interpol cronies, who pitch him a deal identical to the one Li Wi just offered — at half the money, but with substantial patriotic value.

They load him up with a bunch of phony gadgets and send him on his way under the cover identity of Frank Frobe (as in Gert Frobe, the actor who recently assayed the role of Auric Goldfinger). In Alacante, he makes contact with an exotic dancer named Cynthia Lewis (Sophie Hardy) who, in turn, spies on him through the one-way panel between their hotel rooms.

Meanwhile, Lady Cecilia Addington Courtney (Françoise Brion), an agent for the "Superior Council" — the force behind the robo-men — secures a sample of Peterson's blood and rushes it to a secluded mountain fortress for analysis.

Against the advice of Sir Percy (Fernando Rey — looking quite fetching in a mad scientist lab smock) she sends a team of zombies to bring him in for robotizing. Li Wi has a similar idea, and he also sends a team of agents to capture Peterson. Unfortunately, Peterson is out for the evening, enjoying Cynthia's saucy nightclub act (Franco himself is tickling the ivories in the house band). Meanwhile the two criminal factions converge in Peterson's room, trashing the place in the ensuing melee. When Peterson comes back to his suite, he finds it a shambles and leaves to lodge a complaint with the management. While he's out the Chinese — comically — straighten the room, leaving Peterson to make lame (and lamely dubbed) excuses to the staff.

Later Peterson discovers a couple of oodles that have been left behind. He hides a zombie's corpse in the bathtub, only to have it discovered by Cynthia. They relocate the body to a wardrobe — already containing the body of a Chinese agent. Immediately there's a knock on the door. A team of men enter and helpfully cart away the incriminating wardrobe, wishing a very confused Peterson "good night."

Returning to the bathroom, Peterson finds Cynthia enjoying a bubble bath in the very tub which, moments before, contained a chalk-white corpse. This cavalier dismissal of the recent dead is both comic and oddly unsettling, a perfect Franco moment. Considering his later reputation, is it surprising that the scene carries a vaguely necrophilic overtone?

Peterson visits Li Wi aboard his yacht, demanding some answers. Li Wi happily enlightens him regarding the dangerous position his superiors have purposely placed him in. He again offers Peterson a substantial reward to retrieve the robotizing formula. This time, Peterson accepts. Returning once again to his hotel, Peterson once again finds an unwelcome visitor — the hotel evidently having some sort of open door policy towards zombies and spies. This time it's Lady Cecilia. He taunts her with a pair of glasses he lifted off a "robot" the night before. She takes them back at gun point and hightails it, with Peterson in hot pursuit.

But Cynthia, thinking Peterson has turned traitor, is on his tail. When a convenient herd of goats blocks Peterson's car, allowing Cecilia to escape, Cynthia confronts him and tries to force him to jump off a cliff. An equally convenient tour bus blocks her line of fire, and provides Peterson with means of escape.



One of the bizarre "human robots" from Franco's **CARTES SUR TABLE**.

ANALYSED BY MICHAEL MONAHAN

# SPY IN THE SKY



Super spy Al Peterson and "Superior Council" agent Lady Cecilia Addington Courtney.

At the castle, Cecilia and Sir Percy receive word from the Superior Council that Peterson is an Interpol agent, and must be dealt with immediately. Guran, an Interpol agent who has recently been monitoring Peterson's progress, becomes a target of the killer robots. He and Peterson have just made contact when the trap is sprung. Cornered at dockside, Guran is done in by the robot known as Mr. One. Peterson takes out Mr. One with a spear-gun and — on a hunch — puts on the robot's glasses.

Tuned into the control signal, Peterson is led back to the castle and captured. He's thrown into a cell with Cynthia, revealed to be yet another Interpol agent (no doubt a graduate of their rigorous bump and grind academy), and finally convinces her he hasn't gone over to Li Wi.

Lady Cecilia, meanwhile, has developed quite a thing for our masculine hero. She has Peterson brought to her chambers and, with an honor guard of robots surrounding the bed, turns on all her feminine charms. Sir Percy, spying jealously from the balcony, takes aim at Peterson. But — in a moment lifted right out of Young's **THUNDERBALL** — Peterson spins Cecilia into the path of the bullet. Dying, she still manages to rip the alarm, sending the robot army after the fleeing agent.

Sir Percy retreats to the lab, and is desperately preparing Cynthia for robotizing, when Peterson bursts in and short-circuits the controls. The discombobulated robots turn on their master and, in classic monster movie style, Percy becomes victim to his own creations.

Using a flare gun given to him by Li Wi — which sky-writes Chinese characters, no less — Peterson summons reinforcements. Li Wi's men storm the castle, routing the robots and rescuing the prisoners. But, back aboard the yacht, Peterson and Cynthia realize they are now under Li Wi's control, and he expects them to work for his side. Flinging a cigar he thinks is full of tear gas, Peterson is crushed to hear Li Wi's men laughing, while their leader explains to him that he's been given a load of phony gadgets. To demonstrate, one of them opens a trick umbrella, which promptly explodes — as advertised — allowing Peterson and Cecilia to escape.

**T**here's been a great deal of confusion attached to **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** over the years. More than one film source has listed the release date as 1962 and, due to the presence of Eddie Constantine, have aligned it with the popular Lemmy Caution series. The cheap black and white photography may reinforce this impression. But the inclusion of a Presidential portrait of Lyndon Johnson, pop culture references and the long-in-the-tooth look of its star confirm the on screen copyright of 1966.

On first viewing the film seems painfully stiff, the low production values irritating. But a second look reveals a much more fluid pace. And the film's goofy sense of self-parody grows on you, supporting the notion that Franco's work is an acquired taste. While most of the daylight footage looks sloppy, rushed, and visually stark, the night time sequences show a great deal of care. Moody, thoughtfully composed, and beautifully lit, some scenes go so far as to evoke a dreamlike unease.

This is not to say that **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** is some kind of undiscovered classic. The wildly uneven presentation robs the film of much of its potential fun. Piss-poor dubbing goes further to destroy whatever sense of comic rhythm the film originally had, though a few zingers survive the questionable translation. Presenting Peterson with a pair of gloves which purportedly carry a lethal electrical charge, the Interpol chief dryly observes the current is

"strong enough to kill 20 adults ... or 30 children."

Attacking the problem of being a "famous secret agent," the movie has Peterson constantly recognized by bellboys and street vendors, who constantly threaten to blow his cover. In the course of his mission, Peterson has information delivered to him by 12-year-old secret agents, but still never seems to have any idea what's going on around him. Some of the silliness is actually pretty inspired, and goes a long way to keep spirits up during the more confusing sections.

At the heart of the confusion are the "robots." Just exactly *what* are the damn things suppose to be? Are they living people under some sort of mind control? Reanimated corpses? In either event, the robotizing process causes the darkening of the skin. In a fleeting but affectionate tribute to Franco's beloved Universal monster movies, Fernando Rey lowers victims into some kind of overgrown test-tube. Sparks fly and shadows jump — in the old Frankenstein tradition — while the tube microwaves the subject, or some such thing. Slip on the glasses for direct receiving of orders, dress them in shiny black vinyl, and what you got here is your basic zombie spy. Or something....

By not establishing the undead status of the assassins, the movie misses the chance to be genuinely creepy. Not that the "robots" are particularly imposing anyway. Between the slick grease paint and the nerdy spectacles they look like a zoned-out math club performing their tribute to Al Jolson. The stuff of nightmares maybe, but hardly the goosepimple kind. The touches of visual poetry in some of their nocturnal wanderings — recalling Franco's **EL SECRETO DEL DR. ORLOFF/DR. ORLOFF'S MONSTER** (1964) — make the lost opportunities all the more galling.

On the other hand, Franco really scores with the highly stylized control room in the castle. Robots man extended rows of ringing telephones and clattering typewriters, while a dispassionate, disembodied computer voice drones a endless litany of numbers. Possibly staged as a tribute to **ALPHAVILLE** (1965, D: Jean-Luc Godard) the sequence is both visually arresting and artfully chilling.

The musical score, by Paul Misraki, lacks any immediately hummable themes. But the overall effect is strong, providing much needed backbone to some of the more meandering car chases and bus rides. The brassy, punchy melodies would not be at all out of place in a Mike Hammer movie — and by the way, neither would Eddie Constantine.

In fact, the strident music, black and white photography, and Constantine's bulldog features recall a world much closer to Mickey Spillane's roughneck hero than to the more flamboyant adventures of Derek Flint or Matt Helm. These are the qualities that provide the direct link to the cops, gangsters and monsters formula of 50's B-movies like Jack Pollexfen's **THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN** (1956) and the aforementioned **CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN**. All in all, even non-fans of Jesús Franco should find enough in **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS** to rate it a guilty — if archaic — pleasure.



Mad doctor Fernando Rey and the scheming Françoise Brion.

#### CARTES SUR TABLE

Spanish: **CARTAS BOCA ARRIBA**. US: **ATTACK OF THE ROBOTS**. France/Spain, 1966. p: co-Speva Films-Ciné Alliance/Hesperia Films. d: Jesús Franco. sc: Jesús Franco & Jean-Claude Carrière. ph: Antonio Macasoli. art d: J.A. D'Eaubonne. ed: Marie-Louise Barberot. m: Paul Mizraki. sd: Jacques Gérard. as d: Pierre Lary. p: Michel Safra. cast: Eddie Constantine, Françoise Brion, Fernando Rey, Mara Kelly, Dina Loy, Aida Grace Powers, Sophie Hardy, Alfredo Mayo, Mark Harrolds [= Marcelo Arroital], Vicente Roca, Ricardo Palacios, 'Lemmy Constantine'. Widescreen. rt: 85 min.

# MONSTER MASH

## DARNA

1991, D: Joel Lamangan

Reviewed by Cameron Scholles

**DARNA** is a horror fantasy about a flying kung-fu superheroine and her battle against a Satanic crime boss and his assemblage of monster henchwomen.

Conceived in the 60's by Mars Ravallo, the character of Darna has previously appeared in both comic and film formats. This latest cinematic installment is set and shot in the Philippines and stars Nanette Medved in the title role.

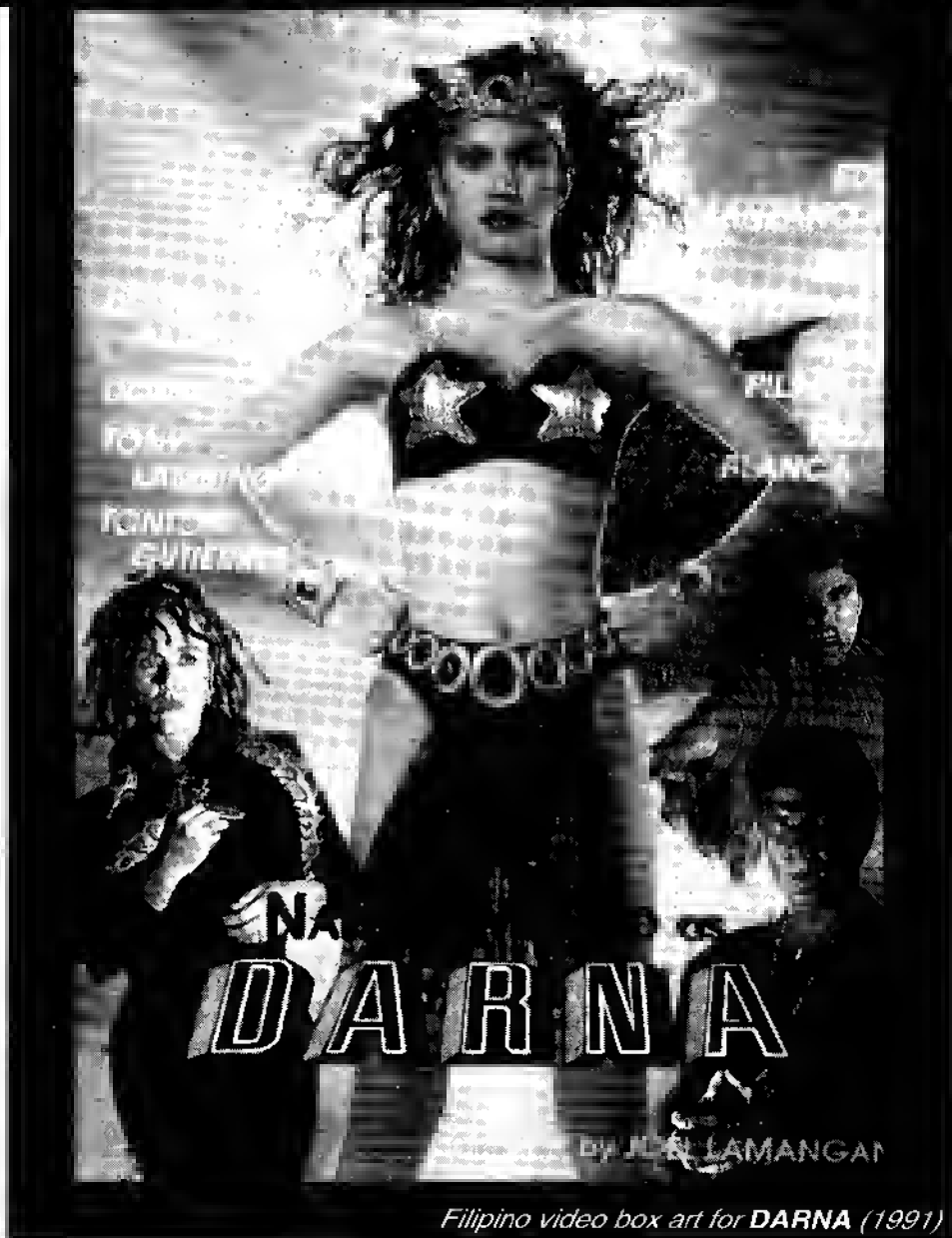
In a short origin reprisal the film follows the exploits of its title heroine from her childhood creation to quick rise as an urban crime fighter who bears all the mystic — and story elements — of the Superman/Clark Kent persona. The film's structured plot and action gusto seemingly reflect two popular art cultures: the American pulp comic book and the Hong Kong films on a technical level, **DARNA** does manage to achieve its desired goal on the foundations of pure camp cinema.

The story begins in the year 1900 when an expedition to the tropics enters a lost cave and discovers an ancient amulet. Immediately the gold hunters turn on each other and slug it out until only one remains to claim the medallion within a sudden swirling of Satanic incantations voiced up from a hellish locale below.

Seventy-five years later in a tiny village community an impoverished young girl by the name of Narda meets an angel. Narda, a seemingly joyful nymph whose disposition counters the harsh conditions of her surroundings, is blessed by the angel who gives onto her a magical power — the kind that makes nice young girls glow in the dark, literally.

From there we time-shift to present day to find Narda a blossoming young woman who, with the placing of a magic pearl in her mouth, can transform herself into the kung-fu superheroine Darna — who comes complete with red designer bikini replete with gold stars on each breast; gold flying wing tiara; knee high red boots; and bullet repelling bracelets.

To first demonstrate her chop socky prowess, Darna pounds straight a handful of village punks who decide to harass her smaller brother. She then takes to the skies over Manila (aided by a horrendous blue screen effect) and begins saving its civilians from the tide of their neighborhood crime waves. The evil Dominicio, a devil-worshipping descendant of the man responsible for unearthing the ancient medallion 90 years ago and a wealthy industrialist with born-again Christian Dior good looks and charm, is using the facade of a philanthropist to lull the citizens of Manila into an over-confident sleep in preparation for his underworld conquest. Fortunately for the snoozing masses,



*Filipino video box art for **DARNA** (1991)*

Darna senses the ploy of this money-bearing hellspawn and is quick to put his name at the top of her most-wanted list. But by then Dominicio has long since received orders from a Devil incarnate magician (who can rotate his head 360 degrees) to capture and kill Darna. To aid Dominicio in his mounting mayhem against humanity, a pair of shape-shifting monsters are created from the bodies of two unfortunate women. The first victim is the world renowned Valentina who Dominicio laughably serenades to an instrumental version of Kiss of Fire before transforming her into a Gorgon

— whose wig of dangling cheap rubber snakes bears a remarkable resemblance to a wig of dangling cheap rubber snakes. Dominicio then reduces a lowly 3rd grade teacher into a winged, flying werewoman complete with fangs, thick eyebrows and black hair that sprouts from her limbs like pink candy floss in a spin drum.

Add on a wise-cracking, muppet-like snake in lipstick and you have the makings for a classic Filipino monster battle replete with bad special effects, young girl kung-fu, and maniacal monster mania.

So with all the titled combatants picked and ac-



counted for, the action really begins to heat up. Here's a run down of the ten major rounds thereafter:

\* The winged werewoman flies about Manila sinking her fangs into the necks of Darna's close friends in hopes of drawing out the elusive superwoman.

\* Valentina hosts a fashion show during which she unveils her coiffure of rattlers and vipers to an unsuspecting audience who are then besieged by a hoard of snakes. Darna saves the day but accidentally reveals her true identity to Valentina. The bounty-hunting snake woman waits until Darna transforms back into Narda before engaging the lithe beauty in a quick slug fest. Narda is KO'd and returned to Dominicio.

\* Darna is sedated and forced into a ritual circle and offered as sacrifice to Dominicio's hellish high command.

\* Two boy scouts bust into the Satanic den of ill repute and in the nick of time rescue dizzy Darna from total damnation.

\* Soon after, Darna returns to the vengeance trail and wrestles the werewoman in mid-air. She snaps one of the beastie woman's wings and then crucifies her on a glowing church cross.

\* Dominicio responds by having Darna framed as a criminal and then tossed into jail.

\* Narda's newspaper editor refuses to print a story which would convince the masses of Darna's contrived guilt. For his disobedience the man is forced to vomit up a bucket full of cockroaches.

\* Darna is released by a sympathetic jailer.

\* Darna battles Gorgon Valentina. They toss about various electrical transformers until a fatal pitch sees the Gorgon blown up.

\* Before her hometown crowd, Darna faces off against Dominicio, who is equipped with a glowing trident that fires laser beams. Darna is pummeled from pillar to post before realizing her foe's weakness and eradicating his existence.

Lurking below the surface, below all the latex and fangs, we find striking similarities between DARNA and numerous texts in American popular culture. For example, when Darna must find her alter-ego Narda a job in the big city, she selects a "major metropolitan newspaper" and is hired on as a reporter. Sound familiar? It may sound even more so when you add on a love-lorn office boy suffering from the Lois Lane syndrome — an inability to recognize the visual similarity between two identical people just because one wears strategically placed glasses. We also found particularly interesting in those scenes in which Darna is tied to the tracks of an oncoming locomotive, or shown rising up from beneath a tropical pond in the moldiest cheesecake fashion that one envisions the latest commercial for creme-rinse conditioner. Scenes like these almost beg us to recall Republic's cliffhanger serials and Dorothy Lamour's 40's films. What remains predominantly Eastern are the monsters. Adjacent to sinister Filipino films like **SUPER INDAY AND THE GOLDEN BIBI** and **IMPAKTITA**, DARNA seemingly derives its creatures from numerous tales of mythology and superstition wherein the images of gargoyles, gorgons, snakes and spiders play so heavily. Catholicism also runs rampant and lends its support to the demise of these beasts from crucifixion to incineration. Of these the most potent remains the fate of Dominicio, who is symbolically castrated when his Satanic medallion is shorn from his body and then

crushed to dust within the hand of his superheroine adversary. His imminent demise is followed by more wonderfully poor special effects when he regresses down to a quivering skeleton.

A comedic element does exist, and more often than not it's of the Stogesque variety. Costume-wise there's a striking resemblance between Darna and Charles Moulton's Wonder Woman. But the litigating similarity between them is countered by Nanette Medved's pubescent good looks and school-girl bod. When saddled into her outfit, Medved's



*Snooky Serna stars as the venom-spitting snakes pigtailed! From the first ZUMA film.*

Darna appears not so much a formidable buxom amazon but a day-dreaming girl-guide who imagines herself a superheroine while she bounces about her bedroom dressed in momma's plasticwear lingerie. This alluring theme which entails a teenage girl becoming a mature crimefighter (another very Asian trait seen recently in Japan's *Sukeban Deka*/"Tough Girl Cops" series) is a concept sadly ignored by the Western film and television media in response to an obviously different rank of mentality and acceptance amongst the North American viewing public.

#### DARNA

Philippines, 1991. 4-Joel Lamangan. sc- Frank G. Rivera. p-William Laery. cast- Nanette Medved, Nida Bianca, Edu Manzano, Pilar Pilapil. Color. rt- 107 min.

## ZUMA

1988, D: Jun Rouiza

Review by Colin Geddes

It is obvious by the content of **MONSTER! INTERNATIONAL**, fans of creature celluloid have been searching the far corners of the Earth for more fiendish delights. Often the perceptions of what constitutes a monster film in other countries is radically different than what we North Americans hold. The most popular examples are the new-found films of Hong Kong, Japan and Mexico; however films from other countries are a little more obscure. The films from the Philippines fall into this category, with the John Ashely/Eddie Romero *Blood Island* series being the most common and available.

The majority of the films available for rent in Filipino video stores are action flicks (with lurid blood-soaked covers similar to Hong Kong videos) and silly comedies. Occasionally, one can find horror films scattered randomly throughout the selection.

The video box cover of **ZUMA** screams: "Was he man or snake?!" Despite the cover being completely in English, the film itself is not. Instead, the language of Tagalog (a curious mixture of Spanish and native tongue) is spoken (peppered with an odd English phrase or two).

After a pyramid is unearthed by scientists, a large, bald, green, muscular humanoid creature with two large snakes attached to its shoulders is accidentally released. The monster kills a young man with an army of cobras and rapes his girlfriend, turning

her into his assistant. From the start of the film we never clearly see the beast, only getting point-of-view shots as he kills young girls. Zuma's assistant lures the women into the dank Manila sewers where her master slaughters them. These killings are pretty grisly (and the girls, often topless, seem to be in their early teens) with Zuma's fists going through their torsos. The demon's large snakes burst through a young girl's chest with the still-beating heart in it's mouth which it promptly spits out. Newspaper headlines scream "SNAKE BEAST CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM" displayed over footage of evacuating Filipinos. Our scientist hero uses his girlfriend as bait to lure the beast and his female companion into a trap. Just before the trap is sprung Zuma reveals himself to the woman and makes a lengthy speech, presumably about his origin and grand plans.

With his female aide (now completely bonkers) in jail, Zuma is trapped and placed in a cage in a field by the army, which tries to kill him. A firing squad fails to harm Zuma, so a machine gun is brought in which only pisses off the snakes, which weave back and forth. Finally a tank is utilized and the exploding shells cause a rock slide imprisoning Zuma in the side of a mountain. Back at the jail, troubles arise with his female pawn who discovers that she is pregnant with Zuma's child. She screams about Zuma and upsets her fellow inmates until she is beaten to death by a female guard. During a medical of her corpse, drops of her blood attack a nurse (yes, attack a nurse). The frightened woman is taken into surgery and a creature resembling a small rubber ball with frog's legs attached (dragged across the floor with a string) pop's out from her skin and chases after the screaming doctors. This scene has to be seen to be believed. The tiny terror crawls up a nurse's gown, attaches itself to her thigh and starts to drain her blood until our hero catches it and has it placed in a safe and buried by the sea.

With the ordeal over, the hero marries and lives happily until earthquakes rock the country, releasing Zuma. He digs up the buried safe containing the rubber ball monster and finds that it has grown into a baby Zuma! Yes, a nude child with two snakes growing from its shoulders! Zuma picks up his heir, only to be bitten by the snakes. He hides in the face of a hill and goes into a coma. Around sixteen years pass and the child has been adopted by the hero and his wife and grows into an attractive young girl except for two overly large braids of hair to hide the two snakes. Zuma awakens and goes on a rampage searching for his daughter. The local villagers attempt to fight back with sticks, guns and even a steam roller (!), all useless as he rips out their throats with the help of his snake appendages and his army of snakes (lots of people wrestling with snakes and being bitten to death). The final battle takes place between Zuma and his daughter in the pyramid where Zuma was originally imprisoned.

ZUMA seems to go on forever, but that is probably due to the fact that there is so much dialogue. The monster is silly looking (yet fantas-

tic) and his daughter even more so. This shouldn't matter since the film is pretty bizarre in the first place. The credits indicate that it is based on characters from Aliwan Komiks (that's the spelling given), but Filipino comics are even harder to trace than movies! ZUMA is a worthy addition to the number of ever growing, newly discovered international monster films.

### ZUMA

Philippines, 1985. *p co-* Yalong Group/Cine Sperte. *d-* Jun Raquiza Yatung. *assoc d/adaptation-* Hernán Robles. *sc-* Manny Rodriguez. *based on characters from the comic book by* Jim Fernández. *ph-* Alfonso Alvarez. *p des-* Interforma. *art d-* Luchy Guillermo. *visual fx-* 'Ramji'. *Zuma fx crew-* Rudy De Chávez, Lorenzo Anonas, Pepino Abrea & Lito Vargas. *ed-* Serafin Dineros. *m-* Marita Manuel. *sd-* [uncredited]. *makeup-* Beth Hammond; (*prosthetics-*) Cecile Baum. *snake handler-* Cetedonio Erica. *p mgr/as d-* Ruben P. Chávez. *2nd unit d-* Ben Yatung & Hernán Robles. *exec p-* Benjamin C. Yatung. *cast-* Max Davao, Rev. P.J. Abellana, Maria Montes, Racquet Monteza, Ella de Córdova, Marie Blanca, Mark Joseph. *MPL Color. rt-* 131 min.

## ANAK NI ZUMA

Alternate Titles:

**ZUMA 2, HELL SERPENT**

1987, D: Ben Yalong

Reviewed by Max Della Mora

Zuma seems to be a character born from the ink of a comic book artist on acid: the creature is tall, muscular, bald, and half-naked (except for a pair of shorts which cover his genitalia). His skin is emerald green and atop his shoulders are two big, perpetually active snakes, making Zuma one of the more peculiar villains in the history of Asian cinema. **ANAK NI ZUMA** is the second film in this series; which is based off the long-running Filipino Zuma comic book.

Released from an ancient Philippine tomb, Zuma terrorizes local villagers, raping every young virgin he and his serpents come across. One of the women gives birth to Galema who, like her father, sports two smaller serpents on her shoulders. Raised by an archeologist, Galema becomes a nice girl who hides her two snakes with her long black hair. Her supernatural father is hot on her tracks, and wants to take her away from her adopted human parent. Galema responds to her real father's call and as a result the two clash and Zuma gets imprisoned in a pit.

The mutant half-human then marries Morgan, a human who loves her. When she discovers she is pregnant by him, Galema discusses with her husband the possible aspects that their son may have; will he be a normal human child or a monster? The dialogue in this scene sounds pretty bizarre and demented, so much so that it reminds me of the psychotronic masterpiece **BLOOD FREAK** (1971, D: Brad F. Grinter). Galema's apprehension is unfounded: she gives birth to a healthy baby boy, although the child has a "twin," a little white snake which gets as much attention and love from its parents as his human brother. Zuma rapes another woman who later manages to escape from the monster's prison to give birth — along with gouts of blood and chunks of lacerated flesh as the "baby" tears through her belly — to Dino (!), a half-lizard/half-man with a soft spot for ravishing and killing young women (just like his father). The green-skinned Zuma plots to use his new son Dino to kill his rebellious daughter, but the strange critter gets captured and put in a zoo. Here Dino falls in love with a girl who shows him some tenderness (she offers him a hamburger — sure sign of true love!). When Zuma attacks another village helped by an army of creeping snakes (some of which are created by cheap animation superimposed over real ones), Dino opposes his father and, after a bloody battle, Zuma is victorious and tears out the heart of his son.

Our emerald giant attempts to assassinate his daughter again, this time utilizing her baby snake child against her (**ANAK NI ZUMA** is all based on the "rebellious child" theme — could it be considered a "juvenile delinquent mutant" movie?). The snake attacks its parents and its poison, ineffective against its snake-mother, proves lethal for Galema's husband. Blinded by hate toward her evil pappy, Galema goes to Zuma's den, a cave populated by more strange creatures (all wearing terribly cheesy masks, there's even one which looks like the vagina-like aliens from Tim Kincad's 1986 **BREEDERS**). In an excessive and chaotic script where there seems no



Filipino video box art from **ZUMA** (1985).

coherent way to wrap everything up, Zuma is blasted full in the chest by a tank waiting for him outside of his lair and, unconscious, he's thrown unceremoniously into a garbage incinerator. As tradition teaches us, though, Zuma isn't dead yet...

In both **ZUMA** movies there are, melted together, discordant elements from which rise a peculiar hybrid which never ceases to amaze and surprise us for its demented potential. We have not only Zuma whose monstrous laugh booms like thunder as an exclamation mark for all his evil doings (like in an old cartoon from the 30's), but there is some sex (the rapes), gore and paper maché creatures. Dino, worthy of the worst **SPECTREMANS** episodes (one Japanese TV show which I think is terrible — sorry all you fans out there), is a poor soul with a big lizard man mask on his head and a long, rigid tail on his back. The tendency to gain Dino some sympathy from the audience via a micro-romantic sub-plot makes him seem even more absurd and artificial.

Rather heavy are the scenes where Zuma's snake army is torn to pieces by the local villagers and military forces. No use of rubber snakes here, but a large quantity of *real* serpents are massacred by machete blows and raked by machine gun blasts. All of this gore, flying scales and meat, is nothing short of the sick gusto of the worst Mondo movie (in a few words, all of them ...).

Another snake man appeared in the Filipino **KISS OF THE SERPENT** (1988, D: James Ingrassia; alternate title: **SNAKE ISLAND**) in which, recycling the psycho-killer theme of a mysterious man who kills for revenge by using a strange snake-shaped glove with long fangs dripping poison, offers at the ending some local folklore by showing the killer turning into a giant rubber serpent. I saw this film some time ago and then never heard of it again, not a big loss as it hasn't the same charisma as a **ZUMA** movie.

Filipino cinema is mostly known in the West for the short serial movies made by Eddie Romero (most of them are rather good, like the *Blood Island* saga) in the 60's and 70's, but fantasy pictures had been made as early as in the 50's with weird films that united Catholic imagery with local legends (like the more recent Efren C. Pinon 1979 film **THE KILLING OF SATAN**, where the protagonist, after meeting God himself, fights the Devil shown dressed in black, with horns, spiked tail and pitchfork. If it wasn't for the nudity and gore, you might think you were watching some sort of school play) or others about their own mythology like "Ramadal," the invisible man who speaks Tagalog; "Exzur," a visitor from some far away galaxy; "Dyesebel," a sad siren unlucky in love (a movie directed by Geraldo De Leon, who directed the 1958 Filipino classic **BLOOD CREATURE/TERROR IS A MAN**, as well as a handful of very atmospheric vampire films later on); and many other super heroes and super heroines inspired by Superman, Batman, and Tarzan, totally unknown to us and which we will probably never see. Or maybe not... only time will tell.

Credits not available at presstime.

## THE JOHNSTOWN MONSTER

1971, D: Olaf Pooley

Review by Tony Lee

Over here in old blighty we have an organization called the Children's Film Foundation, set up back in the 40's to make movies "specifically for children," and funded by the (now abolished) Eady Levy — which taxed about 8% of the UK box-office to help promote indigenous film production. This process of financing British pictures was axed in the Mid-80's much to everyone's chagrin, not just the C.F.F. As of 1981 the non-profit Foundation no longer makes films itself, but only develops scripts for commercial productions.

While a typical C.F.F. product was generally a Disney-ish affair, with a cast including children and a basically harmless adventure theme, few of their movies involved fantastic subjects, and fewer still delved into the SF/Horror themes usually associated with magazines like *Monster! International*. However, you'll have no doubt gathered from the title of this film that there were exceptions.

Set in picturesque locations down in southern Ireland, this short film tells of how a bunch of local boys and girls decide to create a tourist attraction for their sleepy little village. This "tourist trap" is in the form of a monster which will inhabit the Johnstown Lough. This little escapade is prompted by the photo of a toy boat afloat in the lake (which looks full-sized in the snapshot), that appears to show a Loch Ness-type monster in the background. The mischievous kids, with the aid of a local grown-up "character" (i.e. the village oddball) construct a trick monster out of wood, chicken wire and tarpaulins, which they float out on the still waters. Creature-watchers (like bird-watchers, only less successful) turn up in droves when the word gets out about the lake beastie. These hopefuls include some gullible Americans on vacation, supposedly in search of their Irish ancestors.

Like an Enid Blyton story with a hint of old blarney, this is frightfully dated, even for the year it was made. Written and directed by the quite hopelessly naive Olaf Pooley, it's as corny as a bowl of Kellogg's cereal. Interest from the media, as well as the zoological and archaeological scientific communities means the youngsters have to maintain a high profile for their makeshift dinosaur, and this entails a lot of mucking about in boats and, inevitably, quaint footage of travelogue-style landscapes. In the predictable finale, the gung-ho Americans become suspicious of the many timely appearances of the photogenic submersible mock-monster, and so row out onto the lake and shoot holes in the kids' inflatable beastie. The wounded sham sinks spectacularly, exposing its true colors. But then, in an obvious twist ending, which isn't the least bit convincing, a *real* monster (close-up shots of a lizard under water, pre **JAWS**-style) attacks and capsizes the killjoy's boat.

The dialogue is stilted, the direction suspenseless and unambitious, so that you're left wondering why the hell producer Gabrielle Beaumont (who later directed **THE GODSEND**, 1979), bothered with such a poor story. The stereotype Yankee visitors were obviously intended to grant the picture a chance



Video box art from the British-made **REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID** (1991).

at the US market (did it ever make it over the Atlantic, I wonder?), and the Irish locale and cast (homely brogues so thick you could make shoes out of their tongues) so purely incidental that **THE JOHNSTOWN MONSTER** could have been shot almost anywhere in Britain.

### THE JOHNSTOWN MONSTER

GB, 1971. p co- Sebastian Productions for Children's Film Foundation. d/sc- Olaf Pooley. ph- Clive Tuckner & Ray Sturges. art d- Arnold Chapkis. ed- L.P.P. m- Harry Robinson. p- Gabrielle Beaumont. cast- Connor Brennan, Simon Tully, Michael Goodliffe, Rory Bailey, Kim McDonald, Amanda Jane Tully, Seamus Kelly, Dermot Ryan, Eamon Keane, Gerry Alexander, Joan O'Hara, Derek Farr. Eastmancolor. rt- 54 min.

## REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID

1991, D: Jim Groom

Review by Tony Lee

Larger than life and thrice as ugly, this isn't the formulaic Western revival its title suggests. Nope. **REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID** is a hoe-down of a horror about, of all things, a mutant goat! On an isolated island, despised by the mainlanders, live the ghastly MacDonald clan: Ma, Pa, and the kids, two boys and a girl all named Ronald (get it?). There's there grandpop, but he dies early on in the show and gets tossed on the compost heap while his heirs squabble over his few, meager possessions. No airs and graces for this bunch of country folk with dung for brains. One son is relentlessly clumsy, and manages to shoot off his foot and chop off his fingers before the film's singular crude joke which spawns the film's title character. Farmer Gyles MacDonald

buggers the farmyard goat and fathers a hideous, monstrous offspring. The film then descends into the cheap, tacky, and ineptly staged horrors as the rustic simpletons get killed off one by one.

The feeble characters are more like caricatures really, the farmer's wife Gretta smokes a pipe and arm-wrestles her numbskull sons; boozy Gyles spends most of his screen time farting or spitting; and all of the rest of this tastelessness is rounded off with medieval table manners. While this may sound like a Pythonesque rebellion against conservative English social mores, it simply isn't funny. Not in the least. The timing for nearly all the jokes and visual gags are, at most, five minutes off, and when the film enters its horrific phase your average viewer may be rather too bored to care. It's impossible to identify with any of these wholly despicable characters.

When the grue finally arrives with the birth of a mewling, mutant "Billy" (so named by Gyles's buxom daughter, Ronnie), and the beastie is saved from death to be adopted by the girl as a pet - trained to fetch sticks like a dog - minor chuckles might arise. However, this is, sadly, as good as the film is ever going to get. From then on it's down hill all the way to Dullsville. Note even the *EVIL DEAD*-style P.O.V. roving camera can liven up this horror-comic dud. Made by an all-to-obviously inexperienced crew who try desperately to make up with sheer enthusiasm for what they lack in ability, the movie goes out of its way to mimic and reference other cult and genre classics. With its farmyard setting, one sequence (perhaps inevitably) spoofs *STRAW DOGS* (1971, D: Sam Peckinpah); another rips a shot from *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON* (1980, D: John Landis) - as Billy attacks a couple of poachers; the scene where Ash gets all tooled up for combat in *THE EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN* (1989, D: Sam Raimi) is mimicked, closely; while the monster itself, scarcely seen in daylight and wisely kept in the shadows, borrows freely from the visual repertoire of *ALIEN* (1979, D: Ridley Scott) with constantly salivating jaws shown in close-up. Detractors will no doubt be quick to point out a horde of similar stolen scenes and half-inched ideas: note the monster's lair, a grisly slaughterhouse littered with human remains - recalling home decor a lá *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* (1974, D: Tobe Hooper); a shock shack-in-the-woods (*EVIL DEAD* again) discovery that instantly dispels any sympathy the audience may have previously felt for this devil. Yes, and satanic imagery - a horned beast preying on humans - is driven home mercilessly, without subtlety. The highlight of the show is undoubtedly the blitz on the two MacDonald brothers by a raging Billy in the farm's darkened barn. The emphasis throughout is on mud and blood (with the SFX by the aptly-named Pain & Gor Company), but it never achieves that eerie *RAWHEAD REX* (1986, D: George Pavlou) ambience, or the sympathetic characterization and tragic mortality of *PUMPKINHEAD* (1988, D: Stan Winston). Instead, we're left with a feeble attempt to continue the brand of Carry-On/Hammer style horrible humor that fueled *I BOUGHT A VAMPIRE MOTORCYCLE* (1990), another British effort whose director, Dirk Campbell, is "specially thanked" in closing credits, and whose influence is clear in this Gothic guff. A pity they didn't let him direct this mess, it may have turned out better.



#### REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID.

GB, 1991. p co-Montage Films Limited. d- Jim Groom. sc- Tim Dennison, Jim Groom & Richard Mathews. ph- David Read. sp ph fr- Niell R. Gorton & Steven M. Painter. m- Tony Flynn. exec p- Tim Dennison, Jim Groom & Richard Lake. co p- Richard Lake. cast- Michael Balfour, Samantha Perkins, Jackie Broad, Bryan Heely, Trevor Peake, Norman Mitchell, Dean Williamson, Michael Ripper, Billy the Kid as Himself. Color. rt- 87 min.

## LOS VAMPIROS DE COYOACÁN

1973, D: Arturo Martinez

Reviewed by Steve Fentone

If you're not especially a fan of Mexi-wrestling horror films, the monstrous (about 15 minutes!) free-for-all tag match that opens this particular example may tax your patience somewhat. Wrestling fans, however, may admire headliner Mil Máscaras' signature aerial acrobatic grappling technique. This ring intro is excessively long even for a film of a genre wherein gratuitous *lucha libre* filler is a prerequisite, but those who understand and accept these movies for what they are (i.e. mindless entertainment) do not let occasional over-indulgence of a particular athletic art-form detract from the fun. After a brief intermission in the locker-room, it's back for still another 4 or 5 minutes in the squared circle!

When a white-masked wrestler is killed in the ring by an emotionless bald-pated opponent, in the dressing room a vampire attended by a trio of silent dwarfs enfolds the downed athlete in his bat-cape in order to administer the undead equivalent of the kiss of life. This vampiristic revelation isn't too surprising when you notice that Germán Robles, noticeably older but still recognizable as Count Lavud/Duval of Fernando Méndez's incredible *EL VAMPIRO* duet (1957) is seated ringside in the

audience. What is surprising, defying your every expectation, is that our main vampiric protagonist is not portrayed by Robles! In fact, the actor doesn't even play a vampire period. Anyway, on with the story...

Assigned to cracking the case of their murdered enmasked colleague are Mil and his current tag-partner, *Superzán* (that's no typo, muchachos!). *Superzán* was a popular real-life Luchador who found fleeting fame in a few filmdom forays (¡Dios Mio! The alliteration...) such as *EL CASTILLO DE LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO*/"The Castle of the Mummies of Guanajuato" (1971, D: Tito Novaro) which, coincidentally enough, also boasted a gaggle of malevolently dwarfish henchmen.

When a sinister baron shows up in full formal evening attire complete with aristocratic beardlet, cane, and cloak, he's the most obvious candidate for Mr. Vampire, naturally. Nora, a doctor's daughter, has been acting strangely of late, and her physician father and Robles seek to diagnose and hopefully cure her consuming ailment. This afflicted female is played by Sasha Montenegro, the lush raven-haired vixen in *SANTO CONTRA LA MAGIA NEGRA*/"Santo vs. Black Magic" (1972) and also co-star in another Santo outing involving nasty Nazis, *ANONIMO MORTAL*/"The Lethal Unknown" (1970).

At the baron's residence, the nobleman oversees the awakening of two decidedly effeminate and foppish male vampires from their ornate caskets (possibly the baron's sons?). A couple of streetwalkers soon serve as unwilling midnight snacks for these two gay-looking bloodsuckers. Chintzy "magic organs" and beeping theremin strains characteristic of the wrestlerthons of the period (see also *LAS MOMIAS DE GUANAJUATO*, etc.) instill their sufficiently "eerie" (read: campy) tone. Nora foolishly leaves her balcony doors open and is soon lured off by the vampiric baron.

In a striking and rather well-executed passage,



the main vampire transforms from man to upright-walking werewolf as he cradles neglected Nora in his arms. This eye-catching metamorphosis recalls John Carradine's progressively more diabolic appearances as he strides towards the camera at the conclusion of the classic "The Howling Man" episode of Rod Serling's *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*. While that TV show relied on strategically placed architectural pillars to help conceal any uneven spots in its time-lapse make-up work, the similar scene in **LOS VAMPIROS DE COYOACÁN** depends solely on carefully strobed mood lighting and well-positioned shadow to obscure rough-edged technicalities. The passage effectively offers proof of the frequent flourishes of modest creative brilliance to be had even in some of the more obscure Mexploitation fare. It is sure to be approved of by nostalgic monsterholics with a bent toward more "old world" style rather than modern prosthetic/animatronic overkill. Great stuff!

Forced to heroically fend off a flock of snarling midget vampires-cum-rubber bats in defence of Nora's safety, Mil and side-kick Superzán this time out succeed in routing the big-toothed baron and his minuscule minions. But soon, our heroine responds to the irrepressible nocturnal allure of the undead as she wanders off through the darkness in the direction of the vampire's abode.

Though it's too bad that Robles doesn't get to belatedly reprise his long-dormant Lavud character herein, I suppose you could credit the casting director with some creative red-herring application at least. I suppose it could be considered an "ironic" touch that Robles here remains firmly in the camp of the heroes. Actually, looking at our rather too robust baron, Robles's more archetypically avian vampiric visage would be more appropriate in the role.

Anyway, once more, after being inundated with an outpouring of paranormal crimson smoke, Mil and Robles are obliged to fight off yet another pint-sized platoon of fright-fanged dwarves, and soon find themselves in the vampire family's spooky domicile. Here, upon a spacious "pagan temple" set loomed over by a statue of a gigantic bat-man gargoyle, they witness Nora draped over an altar and showing her carnivorous fangs as if proud of the fact she's now a full-fledged vampette. In man-bat format, the officiating baron presides.

Mileventually orchestrates the combustion of the villains' coffins, but not before Nora has become totally overcome by the evil disease of vampirism. In a scene that literally reeks of incestuous perversion, she bites the jugular of her elderly Papa with bestial abandon verging on the orgasmic. So distraught is she by her recent act of patricide that Nora opts to commit suicide by leaping into the flames given off by the burning coffins. A quick climactic tussle with the badass bat-baron and malodorous midgets round out **VAMPIROS** in amputated if colorful fashion.

The film does emerge as an initially ponderous but ultimately rather involving late-comer in the masked wrestler vs. monster stakes. Atmosphere is applied and maintained with sufficient conviction and competence. Considering the opening wrestling footage constitutes about a full 25% of **VAMPIROS**'s running time, you'd think the producers might at least have extended the "horror" stuff a touch more. However, the film is possessed

of enough watchability and good moments to qualify it as one of the more appealing of the latter Luchador epics. Optimum time to watch: around 2 or 3 in the morning, preferably on a weekend.

### LOS VAMPIROS DE COYOACÁN

Mexico, 1973. p.co-Producciones Filmicas Agrasánchez. d./sc- Arturo Martínez. assoc d.- Fernando Durán. story- Mario Cid. ph- Javier Cruz. art d./sp- Roberto Muñoz. ed- Ángel Camacho. m- Ernesto Cortázar. sd- Víctor Rojo. sd mix- Heinrich Henkel. makeup- Graciela Muñoz. cost- Esperanza Valerio. pmgr- Ignacio Bonilla. p- Rogelio Agrasánchez. cast- Germán Robles, Mil Máscaras, Superzán, Sasha Montenegro, Carlos López Moctezuma, Mario Cid, Nothanael León 'Frankenstein', Pura Vargas, Mister Tempest, Tony Salazar, El Greco. Eastmancolor. rt- 86 min.

## DÈMONI 3

1991, D: Umberto Lenzi

Reviewed by Erik Sulev

This latest zombie-fest from Euro-trash hall-of-famer Umberto Lenzi is a disappointing film that fails to live up to initial expectations. A unique storyline that had possibilities, along with location filming in Brazil which adds local atmosphere, combined with a few startling gore effects fail to cover up the fact that **DÈMONI 3** shuffles about as aimlessly and as slowly as the six undead black slaves in the movie.

First of all, much of the cast is made up of unmemorable American actors slumming around while waiting for their first Stateside break. In fact, if there's a complaint about most Italian exploitation films these days, that is it. Who are these bozos? Gone are the days when one could count on folks like Ivan Rassimov, Zora Kerova, John Morghen, or Lorraine de Salle to add some personality to a Lenzi gut-muncher. Hell, I'd even settle for one of Mel Ferrer's countless cameos over these unmemorable oafs. At least he had character.

Three Americans are in Brazil to record and study examples of Macumba and Voodoo songs, but so far their efforts have been fairly futile. Things brighten up when Dick (Keith Van Hoven) wangles his way into a secret ceremony and tapes the proceedings. Unfortunately, Dick ends up possessed by Osclan, a Voodoo deity, and receives and amulet which keeps him under the god's control. His sister Jessica (Sonia Curtis), and her lover Kevin (Joe Balogh) mistakenly see Dick's mood swings and bloodshot eyes as little more than the after-effects of a little too much of the local hooch. Unfortunately, when their jeep gets stuck in the jungle and they are invited to stay at a plantation owned by the young and snotty José (Phillip Murray) and his sister Sonia (Juliana Teixeira), they slowly realize the error of their ways, when Dick's recorded Macumba ceremony and Osclan's influence causes the corpses of six slaves murdered one hundred years ago to rise, and search out six white victims as revenge for their deaths.

Granted, it's an interesting plot that moves away from the usual "leaked poison gas" explanation, but too much stupidity on the part of these supposed academics slows things down far slower than they should be. I for one was rooting for the corpses, and at least I had the satisfaction of seeing them literally getting their hooks into the stereotypically superstitious housekeeper (Maria Alves), and Sonia. Things jar to a halt, however, as the remaining goofballs scratch their heads wondering where Sonia has disappeared to, and it takes

a switchblade to José's throat courtesy of Dick/Osclan to get things moving again.

To Lenzi's credit, the zombies look good; not only are they rotled, but also appear moist and slimy with lots of worms, which is far superior to the usual crusty-look that the Italians love (see Andrea Bianchi's **LE NOTTI DEL TERRORE/BURIAL GROUND**, 1980, for a good example of this). I also liked the fact that these zombies were armed with various tools and agricultural implements, which aid various aspects of eyeball poking, itself accentuated with some excessive squishy and drippy sounds. Still, some gut-munching would have been appreciated, even for nostalgia's sake, but the low budget probably scuttled any plans Lenzi may have had. The lack of funds can also be blamed for the flagrant misuse/re-use of footage of zombies rising/walking/burning.

These unabashed attempts at padding, combined with the fact that only three people in the film actually get killed by these walking cadavers, results in a zombie film that is less than satisfying overall. Let's hope that any renaissance in the Italian zombie film won't be limited to misfires like this or the inept **ZOMBI 3** (1988, D: Bruno Mattei). Hopefully, better vehicles for the Italian walking dead are still to come from those who have been coasting on their reputations for the last few years.

### DÈMONI 3

exp- BLACK DEMONS. Italy, 1992. p.co- Filmmirage. d./story- Umberto Lenzi. sc- Olga Pehar. ph- Maurizio dell'Orco. art d/ cost- Giuliana Bertozzi. ed- Vario Amici m- Franco Micalizzi. sd- Piero Parisi. sp/ fx/ makeup- Franco Casagni. exec p- Fabrizio Campaiola. p- Giuseppe Gargiulo. cast- Keith van Hoven, Joe Balogh, Sonia Curtis, Philip Murray (= Philip Munroe), Juliana Teixeira, Maria Alves. Color. rt (approximate)- 90 min.

## MARK OF THE WITCH

1970, D: Tom Moore

Reviewed by Edward L. Mitchell

This sparkling little gem was produced and directed by someone named Tom Moore, who may or may not be the same guy who coughed up **RETURN TO BOGGY CREEK** in 1977, and was the creative genius behind **NIGHT, MOTHER** (1986). When contacted recently, Mr. Moore denied and disavowed any knowledge or participation in the production of **MARK OF THE WITCH**. Should we ask why?

Anyway, moving right along; as is the case with so many low-budget films to come out of the 70's, this one suffers a bit from the dating syndrome. But, once again, if we examine it through Uncle Eddie's Handy-dandy Magic Lens of Subjectivity, then we can see, of course, that we are really the dated ones. What I mean is, here in the high-tech 90's we wallow in obsolescence on a minute by minute basis. What was new is old real fast, right? But with a film like **MARK OF THE WITCH** we have a moment frozen in time. And even if that moment isn't real, it still serves as a reflection of time when things were so very... different.

1970 was a time of strong impressions, as anyone over thirty can tell you. Vietnam, Nixon, Berkeley, Manson, Kent State, and Leary: people and places



whose names are a fiery part of history. Out of that hot womb popped Tom Moore with **MARK OF THE WITCH**; a flawed but interesting film for a flawed and interesting year.

Now, the story line is pretty and straight-up:

Somewhere in England, in 1648, a witch named Margary (Marie Stantell) is condemned to die on the gallows by King James I (which was a pretty neat trick, considering he had been dead for 23 years! As a historical note, the execution would have taken place under the Commonwealth Government of Oliver Cromwell). Before the trap is sprung, the witch launches into a really pissed-off tirade against the guy who betrayed her: a jolly sort of fellow named McIntyre Stuart (it's also interesting to note that he's presiding so openly over the execution, especially since, at that time, anyone who might, by name or deed, be even remotely connected with the House of Stuart was being hunted down and executed themselves. Hmmm...). She winds up her spiel by laying out a curse on this guy (who looks really bored), and all his descendants down through the ages and so on and so forth until ... SPROING! It's Swing City, and the good witch is no more.

Been there, done that! I mean, that bit was lifted practically whole from Mario Bava's **BLACK SUNDAY** (1960). Obviously, no surprises there.

But now we move on to the title credits; and we begin to get the creepy impression that this little flick is not your run-of-the-mill scarefest. Instead of a rousing and sinister music score, we're treated to an eerie and rambling rune song written by the female lead Anita Walsh, and rendered a capella by

Trella Hart. The odd lyrics transform an otherwise mundane street scene into something a bit more ominous; kind of a pervasive feeling of dark normalcy.

Okay, we say; this might have possibilities. After listening to this conjuring little ditty, we're compelled to keep watching, just to see what comes next. This thing could scrub up into something really hot! Surprise!

In the next few scenes, we meet the real monsters of this flick: the actors and actresses who obviously thought that motivation comes from prune juice! Eek! These kids are so straight, they make Frankie and Annette look like neo-Nazi skinheads! Stumbling along through the scenes with gosh and gee oozing everywhere, they give us the exposition and premise of what the hell this picture is all about.

We get to meet Alan (Darryl Wells), the boy-next-door with nice teeth; and his girlfriend, Jill (Anita Walsh), the girl-next-door with nice everything. We're also introduced to Harry (Jack Gardner) and Sharon (Barbara Brownell), two libidos with legs. And the rest of the gang is just as intellectually challenged.

So here we are, in a generic little college town; where the local students are studying witchcraft for their psych class, which is being taught by Professor MacStuart (actor Robert Elston, who bears an amazing resemblance to the guy who hanged Margary the witch over 300 years earlier). Once a week, big Mac holds a seminar of sorts in his home, where the kids drink beer, play with ouija boards, and pretend they're doing magic in the dining room. Wow. Pretty heavy stuff.

At one of these seminar/parties, Jill brings a magic Red Book of Spells she found in a used book store. She shows it around to the other students; and they all decide to play *Let's Conjure Up A Witch*. Giggling like a bunch of 8-year olds, they read out an invocation and pass around a cup of wine. As expected, nothing *appears* to happen. Nothing, that is, except that Jill now seems to be operating on a whole new set of blueprints. She wanders around, spouting "thees" and "thous," and calls some guy an "impudent lackwit." She even kills Mac's dog; but it's okay, because he couldn't act anyway (even his bark was dubbed).

By the time the party is over, she managed to obtain some instant deep cleavage; and announces to Mac that she is the reincarnated spirit of Margary (as if we hadn't already figured that out). Mac takes the news pretty well; he bounces her off the wall only once before caving into her will. It seems that he's also a reincarnate of sorts from the old days; he bears the witchmark, or devil's kiss, on his arm (duh, another surprise).

Alan arrives the next morning to find his girlfriend spent the night at Mac's (he's *real* happy about that), and when he finds out what has happened, he too handles it with wit and aplomb: "Oh, that's just great!"

Anyway, the rest of the film is fairly predictable, with Jill/Margary running around, gathering up sacrificial victims for her demonic purposes, while Mac and Alan try to keep their minds on exorcising the witch out of her.

The whole thing races along with the breakneck speed of a runny nose to a slambang ending that leaves the viewer gasping, "Was that good for you?" Okay, so it's not **CITIZEN KANE**; I admit that. But I actually enjoyed this gooeey little heap of odoriferous badness. Yes, the continuity looks as though it was edited by Conan; but there's a certain naive charm about it that just won't go away.

Remember when I mentioned Tom Moore's film served as a reflection of a particular moment in time? Well, maybe we were a little more naive back then. Maybe we were just stupid. Who knows? But we just better hope the archaeologists never have to use **MARK OF THE WITCH** as a basis for their studies a thousand years from now.

So, there it is: **MARK OF THE WITCH**. Give it a try; you might be surprised.

#### MARK OF THE WITCH

US, 1970. pco- Presidio Productions. d- Tom Moore. sc- Mary Davis, Martha Peters. ph- Robert E. Bethard. set dec- Jim Carver. m- Whitey Thomas. make-up- Lynn Brooks. p- Mary Davis, Tom Moore. assoc p- Patty McKiernan. ex p- R. E. McGowen Jr. cast- Robert Elston, Anita Walsh, Darryl Wells, Marie Stantell, Barbara Brownell, Jack Gardner, Sande Drewes, Gary Brockette, Lori Taylor, John Figlmiller, Lawrence Dupont. Eastmancolor. rt- 84 min.



Anita Walsh (right), possessed by the spirit of a centuries-dead witch, prepares to sacrifice Barbara Brownell from Tom Moore's **MARK OF THE WITCH** (1970).

# SPACE MONSTER

1965, D: Leonard Katzman

Reviewed by Lorne Marshall

In the year 2000, the rocketship *Faith One* is sent into space to find a planet capable of human colonization. After the vessel becomes contaminated by radiation, its commander requests self-destruction, which is granted. NASA launches another exploratory craft, "*Hope One*," with four crew members, one of which is a woman chemist, Dr. Lisa Wayne (Francine York). The captain of the ship, Colonel Hank Stevens (James B. Brown), is not thrilled about her being there, and he makes his feelings known. Not long after they've begun their voyage, the group encounter another spacecraft, which they quickly identify as something from "another planet," though none of them is particularly moved by this unprecedented opportunity to meet intelligent life from elsewhere. Stevens and another crew member, Dr. John Andros (Baynes Barron), board the vessel and are attacked by its sole occupant, an extraterrestrial with an exposed brain (the fright mask is from David L. Hewitt's *WIZARD OF MARS*, 1964, aka *HORRORS OF THE RED PLANET*, and it was originally used in a live "spook show" accompanying presentations of *GIANT FROM THE UNKNOWN* [1958, D: Richard Curnha] in Kansas City). After killing the creature, they plant a bomb on the alien ship, blowing it up so that it doesn't accidentally enter Earth's gravity. They don't even bother taking the cadaver with them for study.

After the rocket survives a meteor storm, the on-board computers fail and the ship is forced to land on a planet a "couple of million miles from anywhere." They touch down in water and quickly discover that they have found the inhabitable world they were seeking, though the life currently being sustained here are giant crabs, which surround the craft. The creatures are warded off with electrical impulses from the rocket's "force screen" so that Andros can swim to the shore to examine the terrain, but a cheesy "Creature from the Black Lagoon" clone (the filmmakers didn't even bother with a full head mask, so the actor's long brunette hairs flows out) is waiting for him.

Stuck between the imaginative "radiation monster" films of the 50's and the soon-to-arrive high-budget outer space epics like Kubrick's *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (1968), *SPACE MONSTER* is a bit of schlock from an era when there were a lot of poorly-made adventures of this type. In this movie, the rockets and celestial bodies are probably no better than you could do yourself. Despite that, the acting is quite good, even if the script doesn't achieve its goal of focusing on York's character which should have been more intelligently developed since the alternate title (*FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE*) suggests that in at least one version, she was the core of the plot ("first woman in space" was already an anachronistic headline, anyhow, for a Soviet cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, had been there two years earlier). In addition, Dr. Wayne rejects the sexual advances of Andros but invites the propositions of the dull colonel, implying that women are irrationally awed by power. She's also pretty stupid: when she sees the crabs, she utters, "What are they?" Dr. Andros is actually the only multi-dimensional



**SPACE MONSTERS**

role: he is obsessed with writing a novel about the experience, and he challenges Stevens' authority on more than one occasion, maintaining a sense of humor that makes the colonel's demeanor seem overly sober.

My favorite moment in this film is when one of the astronauts comments how the planet they've descended onto must be going through an evolution like our own. In their effort to convince us that at this point in time, not only are there civilizations extant in other solar systems, but they can actually traverse the distance between worlds and visit us at will, wishful-thinking UFOlogists never grasp the concept that in the Universe's 15 billion years so far (not to mention its bountiful future), intelligent life forms could have existed for spans that don't coincide with our own. After all, species on Earth develop and die out with obdurate regularity. Some alien society could have tried to communicate with us 65 million years ago, but the dinosaurs ignored them.

My least favorite moment in the movie is when the real crustaceans outside the toy rocket are electrocuted in the aquarium setting, a scene which wouldn't upset most animal rights advocates since, as Stephen Bissette insightfully points out, warm blood doesn't pulse through the vessels of crabs.

Though commonly cited as one of many AIP TV films, the copyright notice lists American Interna-

tional Productions as the studio. Some of the film's participants were involved in A-movies (James Brown was in Peter Bogdanovich's *TARGETS*, 1968, and producer Burt Topper directed Victor Buono in *THE STRANGLER*, 1964), others in B-movies (Russell Bender, who here plays the computer expert Paul Martin, was a general in *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD* [1956, D: Roger Corman] and York did *CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE* [1966, D: Larry Buchanan], and Ted V. Mikels' *THE DOLL SQUAD*, 1973). However, no one stooped as low as writer/director Leonard Katzman: he eventually went on to produce the television series *DALLAS*.

## SPACE MONSTER

export t: *SPACE PROBE TAURUS*. prod t: *FIRST WOMAN INTO SPACE; FLIGHT BEYOND THE SUN*. USA, 1964. p co: Burt Topper Productions. d/sc: Leonard Katzman. ph: Robert Tobey. art d: Paul Sylos Jr. set dec: Morris Hoffman. sp fx: Joe Zomar. alien creature by Harland Stretz Enterprises. ed: Robert S. Eisen & John Shouse. m: Marlin Skyles. sd: Alfred J. Overton. sd fx: Josef von Stroheim. makeup: Harry Thomas. cost: Marjorie Corso. as d: Gene Anderson. 2nd unit d: B. Zarkoff. p: Burt Topper. cast: Francine York, James B. Brown, Baynes Barron, Russ Bender. rt: 80 min. US dist: AIP-TV (1965).

1. "The Spook Show Rackel," *Psychotronic*, #14.
2. "Animal Mutilation: Geek Show Gore," *The Deep Red Horror Handbook*.



THIS ISSUE'S VIDEO VICTIM:

# GREEN JELLO

## CEREAL KILLER

"CEREAL KILLER", THE DEBUT VIDEOCASSETTE FROM "THE WORLD'S FIRST VIDEO-ONLY BAND," GREEN JELLO. HOW TO BEST DESCRIBE GREEN JELLO... HEAVY MENTAL ROCKERS? IN CONCERT, THEY CAVORT ABOUT LIKE COSTUMED CARTOONS, FREED FROM TOONTOWN, AND READY TO ROCK. THEIR MUSIC? A WILD MIX OF CRANKED-UP TO 11 SPEED PUNK, ROCK ROASTED RAW, WHITE NOISE AND LOOPY LYRICS. THE ULTIMATE PARTY BAND FROM PLANET PLUTO. BUT THE REAL STAR OF THE SHOW IS... THE SHOW! AND THIS VIDEO LETS 'EM GO CRACKED-UP CRAZY. 11 MUSIC VIDEOS, ALL IN THE NEED OF A GOOD SPANKING. ASSORTED SORDID HI-LITES INCLUDE:

"THE THREE LITTLE PIGS". YES, IT'S THOSE PIGS, UPDATED AND PLAYED TO A HEAVY METAL BEAT. THIS VIDEO FEATURES CLAYMATION AND GUEST-STARS...

YO,  
WOLF FACE, I'M  
YOUR WORST  
NIGHTMARE.

**RAMBO!**

YEP, AND CLAY RAMBO'S  
A BETTER ACTOR THAN  
STALLONE!

"OBEY THE COWGOD;  
A MAN, IN A COW-  
SUIT SCREAMS...  
DRINK MY  
MILK, FOR IT  
IS MY BLOOD.  
OBEY!"

THE RAGING PAGAN  
TO PAGAN PASSION...

ELECTRIC  
HARLEY HOUSE  
(OF LOVE)

MAKES SENSE  
TO ME!

I'M PLAYING THIS  
SONG AT MY  
NEXT WEDDING!

THE CRANK TO STANK,  
"THE MISADVENTURES OF  
SHATMAN"...

"CEREAL KILLER". THIS IS IT! TOUCAN (SON OF  
SAM GOES PSYCHO, AND BEGINS TRACKING DOWN  
ALL THE OTHER CEREALS' MASCOTS. TOO MUCH  
SUGAR IN THE MORNING WILL DO THAT TO YOU.

SILLY  
RABBIT, TRIXS  
ARE FOR  
KIDS!

GUESS WHAT THIS  
ONE'S ABOUT.

AS FUNNY AS AL  
GORE AT A DISCO.

"HOUSE ME  
TEENAGE RAVE"...

LET'S  
ROCK-N-  
ROLL!

PUNK ROCK, BEDROCK  
STYLE. FRED FLINT-  
STONE REWRITES THE  
SEX PISTOLS' ANTHEM,  
"ANARCHY IN  
THE U.K."...

I  
WANT TO  
DESTROY...  
MR.  
SLATE!

PREHISTORIC  
PREHYSTERICAL!

YOU ALSO GET TO GO BEHIND THE SCENES, TO SEE  
THE MAKING OF THE VIDEOS. (THE PARTY NEVER  
STOPS). PLUS: "TRIPPIN' ON XTC" (THE RED  
HOT CHILI PEPPERS MEET GOD), "ROCK-N-ROLL  
PUMKIHN" (A ROCK-N-ROLL PUMKIHN), "FLIGHT  
OF THE SKAJAQUADA" (SNOWMAN WARS),  
AND THE "GREEN JELLO THEME SONG"...

GREEN  
JELLO  
SUCKS!

YEAH? WELL, SO DOES MARILYN CHAMBERS,  
AND I LOVE HER TOO! STEAL THIS VIDEO!

AND STEAL THE C.D. (YES, "THE WORLD'S FIRST VIDEO-ONLY BAND" HAS A C.D. OUT.) AND, RE-MEMBER, WHEN PLANNING THE TUNES FOR YOUR NEXT BASH, THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR... GREEN JELLO!

# MONSTER! MAIL

CORRESPONDENCE • CRITICISMS • CORRECTIONS • MPO BOX 67 OBERLIN OH 44074-0067 U.S.A. • FAX 216 774 1825

Monster! International — What a great idea! Have you ever seen the lobby card for **SANTO VS. LA INVASIÓN DE LOS MARCIANOS**? I really want to get a hold of a tape of that movie. The girls are gorgeous and wear skin-tight tin foil bathing suits; beehive hairdos!

You should do a feature on all those early 60's West German Edgar Wallace, etc. type pictures with the great weirdo villains and strange camera angles. I don't think anyone's written much about that great stuff. Gorgeous girls there too! Stay Sick!

Lux Interior  
Glendale, CA

I got issues of *Monster! International* 1 & 2 a few weeks ago at my local comic bookstore (who is also selling Sci-fi/Horror books and mags). I liked them very much, especially the 2nd issue with the superlative Steve Fenelon's article on Mexploitation cinema.

I saw a bunch of Mexican features between 1957 and 1962 (I was raised in South America) and I am very glad in getting videos, magazines and books covering all types of Mexican films, but especially *Fantastic Horror/Wrestling* ones. Sincerely,

Albert Bouyat  
Paris, France

I want you to know I really enjoyed your two *Monster! International* issues. Particularly appreciated the Jess Franco article in the second issue as I love Euro-horror. Respectfully,

Larry Marshall

I'm sorry to hear about the demise of the newsletter as I loved the format, small press snob that I am! However, the magazine looks very nice and will hopefully help in your distribution.

The contents were well presented and interesting to read. Some of the films were familiar (glad to read someone who enjoys Fulci's **CONQUEST** as much as I do!), and others sparked my interest, especially Horacio's review of **BOXER'S OMEN**. Keep up the good work!

David Quinn  
Lorain, MA



I discontinued the *Monster!* newsletter format in early 1992 to concentrate on the magazine layout, and I still get requests for subscriptions on a weekly basis! And, yes, *Monster! International's* print run has grown immensely in the past year, but I don't offer subscriptions. Buy your copies from your favorite comic-bookstore or pre-order #4 (*Monster! International* / *Highball* double spectacular), which will be \$5.95 plus \$1.50 postage. This special edition will be out sometime late this year. Watch for it! —T.P.

Yikes! What a great magazine! And from Ohio no less! Steve Fenelon's Mexploitation article and Horacio Higuchi's *Santo* review in issue 2 blew me away. I spent many

Saturday afternoons in the 60's in a tiny theatre in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Those were the days!

Thanks for the flashback. **SANTO! SANTO! SANTO!**  
Sincerely,

Mark J. Price  
North Canton, OH

I want you to know how much I enjoy *Monster! International*. I especially enjoyed the article on Mexican Horror Films. Personally speaking, I have always enjoyed Mexican monster movies.

In fact, **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** has been one of my childhood favorites. I still remember watching Count Frankenstein go about his nastiness on television in the mid-sixties.

However, I contest the chronology of the **THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** and **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE**. According to Messe, Fenelon **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** is a sequel to **THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** which it is not! It is true that both movies were released around 1961, but according to *Fantastic Cinema Subject Guide* by Messrs. Senn and Johnson (MacFarland Press), **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** was released earlier in 1961 and **THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** was released later in 1961. Also, if you watch both movies it is very obvious that the events that occurred in **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** are continued in **THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES**. Both movies can be obtained from Sinister Cinema and I recommend them. They are both funny, and despite the dubbing both movies have extremely eerie moments. I personally love the lines from **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE**: "Whip the horses, for Satan's sake!" or "The doctor is leaving." (That's right, on my print I hear doctor not doctor).

Also there is a wonderful moment in **THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** where the doctor asks his host not to mention to the sleeping Erna Martha Bauman that he's a doctor. Of course, when Ms. Bauman awakens he's introduced as Doctor Ulises!

"Ahem, well I always find this funny!"  
Anyway, keep up the great work!  
Monstrously yours,

Charles R. P. Bucklin  
Oakland, CA



**THE INVASION OF THE VAMPIRES** was shot by the end of 1961; production of **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** started a week later and went out into the following year. They were both released in Mexico in 1962, in reverse order: **THE BLOODY VAMPIRE** came out first —T.H.H.

Hello and many apologies for the interplanetary wait in responding to your letter ... my name is "Throatrake" and I have been asked by my dear friend Buckethead to write to you in response to your wonderful letter & kind gift — Buckethead can't talk or write so I must convey his feelings to you. He was deeply touched by your kind words about his music and very much appreciated the issue of *Monster! International*. He loves monsters thoroughly

as you might've guessed.

... Buckethead wishes for you to know that what I have written to you is absolutely truthful. Please have faith in the mission of fun.

For Buckethead warmly,  
Chicken bones & kisses,

Throatrake  
c/o Bucketheadland  
Claremont, CA  
P.S. Johnny Sokko Lives Forever!



The mighty Buckethead, guitarist and giant monster enthusiasts, is part of the PRAXIS crew and has worked with Bootsy Collins, Bill Laswell, and John Zorn. Watch for his new release *Giant Robot* sometime this August in what will be over 70 minutes of spacey music! In the meantime, be on the look-out for his double Japanese import CD set, *Bucketheadland*.

I totally enjoyed *Monster! International* #1 & #2. You are doing a great public service! Best,

Vale  
Editor, *Re:Search Magazine*  
San Francisco, CA

I just received the first issue I've ever seen (#2) and must say that it is excellent work and one of the very few American fanzines worth reading. A job well done.

Minor corrections to *M/I* #2:

- "Entrails of a Virgin" runs 72 minutes, not 62 as stated.
- **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** has never been available in Japan laserdisc. It was available letterboxed on tape from Tomo Video. Running time is 86 minutes, not 94.

Sincerely,  
Bill Knight  
Coplay, PA



You're absolutely right about "Entrails of a Virgin": sorry about the typo. However, the Spanish version of **WEREWOLF'S SHADOW** runs a full 94 minutes. —H.H.

First a humble apology for not responding sooner — although I've promised to write for at least the last three Chiller Conventions (and Fancx — but who's counting). No excuses, it's just that being a fan has been on a lower priority than paying the rent, worrying about paying the rent, and figuring out how to pay the rent. Nothing personal. Let me get a couple comments to you before *M/I* #3 comes out.

• As for issue #2: I have no corrections per se — just a few personal ramblings  
• Add to the Mexi-films article one title in the dinosaur list:

**EL BELLO DURMIENTE**  
(The Beautiful Dreamer)

1953 • Mexican  
Director: Gilberto M. Solares  
Screenplay: Raul Solares  
Starring: Tin Tan, Lila Del Valle, and Wolf Rnbinsky

PLOT: An expedition finds a living cavemau (Tin Tan) in "suspended animation" in a cave. When awoken he spends the rest of the film coping with

modern life, wooing the scientist's daughter, and (via flashbacks) telling his tales of past adventures.

Comments: A typical Tin Tan vehicle. He gets to act goofy. The modern day romance stuff (and the usual puns and silliness) is tolerable, but it's the caveman flashbacks that are the most memorable. Wrestlers posing as cavemen, dinosaur suits and lots of rear projection combining the two (no cribbed footage from **ONE MILLION B.C.**). The footage seems to be shot for this film. Worth a view.

• Another thing I'd like to bring up. It is my fervent belief that the downfall of the Mexican Cinema has had less to do with any lack of talent than the corrupt regimes of Presidents Echeverria and Portillo. See the accompanying xerox pages. Let's face it, it is almost impossible to make anything of worth when you can't get funded to distributed in your own country just because the politicians insist on stealing 50% of the money available to finance filmmaking.

John W. Donaldson  
New York, NY



**EL BELLO DURMIENTE** was made in 1952. The title is a wordplay on *La Bella Durmiente* or Sleeping Beauty, suggesting a male counterpart to the fairytale character. Careful with Spanish trinomials—they usually indicate, in order: given name, paternal family name and maternal family name. It is the paternal family name that really counts (often the maternal family name is reduced to its initial or omitted altogether) and must always be spelled out. So the director (who also wrote the script, with Juan Garcia) should be listed in full as Gilberto Martinez Solares (and alphabetized under Martinez). The person you mention as the screenwriter—Raul—was in fact the director of photography and also from the populous Martinez Solares film clan. (Also, the Mexican president's family name is not just Portillo, but López Portillo.) A south-of-the-border reviewer once wondered what American monster movie were the dinosaur sequences lifted from.

I agree the decline of Mexican cinema has nothing to do with any lack of talent and is partly—not entirely—due to government corruption. One factor that has effectively destroyed domestic movie production in many economically-unstable countries is shifting audience tastes molded by the aggressive pressure exerted on the market by Hollywood studio affiliates, which peddle slick products that local industries simply can't match in terms of production values and mass appeal induced by heavy publicity. —H.H.

Thank you for the mag — a truly fine and informative publication that is a welcome relief from the proliferation of enthusiastic but generally worthless mags that either rehash the same information/misinformation that's been gone over millions of times or get into stupefying detail with hint of liveliness in the prose.

You've got a good balance of sincerity and maintenance of an appropriately less than stultifyingly reverential attitude (pardon the verbosity and the mess caused

by my flaubertian search for correct expression of my feelings, ha ha).

It was especially nice to see a good Santo filmography (*OPERACIÓN 67* sometimes gets missed by people merely checking the titles of the existing records of Mex. film productions), and due homage paid to the ultra-catholic "magic realism" (another joke or maybe not?) of **EL BARÓN DEL TERROR/THE BRAINIAC**. Keep stompin'!

Mike Lucas  
PHANTOM SURFERS HQ  
San Francisco, CA

We at *MJ* always strive to wade through informative and critical work which, I hope, will shed light on the otherwise dimly under-researched subject of obscure monster movies. I would like to add that Mr. Lucas is part of the PHANTOM SURFERS, a way-out band whose LP "The Phantom Surfers Play from the Big Screen Spectaculars" is available from Estrus Records. This record, as well as those by THE MUMMIES, THE MONO MEN, MAN OR ASTRO MAN? and THE TRASH WOMEN are highly recommended for your listening pleasure. —T.P.

Being the editor of *Markalite*, I really appreciate the coverage you're giving the Japanese productions.

Issue #1: The famous Toho director is "ISHIRO Honda"—not "Inoshirō"—and that's from the man himself. (...) The concept of THE H-MAN, and the other films in Toho's "Mittant" (or "Mysterious Men") series, mixing "detective fiction" and "science fiction", is quite an old/clichéd concept in Japan, and dates back to the days of the pulps. This subgenre was deemed "Henkaku Tantei Shotatsu" (irregular detective fiction) in the 1930s by Saburo Koga, editor of "Shinseinen" magazine; some of the first stories published in the genre were "Angioskaphobia" by Kutarō Kigi (1934), "Vibration Demon" by Juza Unno (1931) and "The Murderous Soundwave" (1934) by Kodo Nomura; so THE H-MAN, THE HUMAN VAPOR, SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN and (loosely) DOGORA—THE SPACE MONSTER (not "Dagora"), are all shoots of this genre, which was originally initiated in the 1930s. (...) LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI or THE SAGA OF THE EIGHT SATOMI DOGS aka SAGA OF THE SATOMI EIGHT (Satomī Jakkē-den), a massive novel, has been filmed several times, including an earlier version by Toei which featured an all-child star cast and a bunraku-style puppet tele-series. Director [Kinji] Fukasaku filmed an sl-version of the story for Toei in 1978, as MESSAGE FROM SPACE. (...) The title of the second film the monster King Ghidorah appeared in was (...) MONSTER ZERO aka GODZILLA VS. MONSTER ZERO not "MONSTER X", as listed in your review of GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH. (...) "The Telegian" [from SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN] was Toho's foreign ad department's name for the "Denso Ningens"; they were also responsible for changing the name of the super-submarine "Goten" in UNDERSEA WARSHIP (Honda, 1963) to "Atragon"—and thus titling the film for foreign export as such, which AIP shortened for its release as ATRAGON. (...) THE GOLDEN BAT was an animated tele-series before the story went before the cameras at Toei as a live-action feature—and was part of a five-picture deal

with Walter-Manley Enterprises, which included TERROR BENEATH THE SEA and THE GREEN SLIME.

Issue #2: ENTRAILS OF A VIRGIN? "Virgin" is not really a good translation of "Shojo"—which simply means "little woman" or "girl". Although, I must admit that your title is more lurid. (...) BIG MONSTER DUEL: DAIGORO VS. GOLIATH was produced by Tsuburaya Productions and released by Toho Motion Picture Company—it's not a Toho production (...). Originally, BARAN was a film commissioned by an American television network and was purposely shot in b&w (television standards at the time did not demand color) and in a flat aspect ratio, Honda told us in one of our many interviews with the man over the last six/seven years, and when the deal fell through—Tomoyuki Tanaka and Toho decided to continue with the project, blowing up the flat footage to TohoScope ratio (little, it any being reshot in the process. This may account for the "compact dialogue" and second-string actors—as the film was meant for foreign export exclusively during preproduction). Oh, by the way, the American version has some sfx footage originally shot for the flat ratio version, so added superimposed mid-air explosions (ala GALACTICA) and some stuff done in Hollywood(?)—Varan's claw trying to extract the principals from their cave—perhaps from the flat ratio version? The name of the supposed "real" name of the monster is "Baranopoda"—according to the shooting script I have. (...) Teisho Arikawa is the correct name for the effects cameraman who is usually listed as "Sadamasa Arikawa"; Sadamasa being somewhat strange, since it is more of an effeminate name—he was a fighter pilot during WW2, and his expertise as a flyer (...) helped in performing some of the most spectacular aerial sfx photography in such Eiji Tsuburaya Toho was films as THE TEMPEST OF THE PACIFIC and DESTROY CILINTAO. (...) I beg to differ, but in the ULTRAMAN teleseries most of the scientist were not into killing off the beasts—most were employed to solve the mystery concerning a particular alien device/object, give the Scientific Investigation Agency for "Science Patrol" new technology (which might destroy a monster indirectly) and advise them in certain areas; most of the time they, and the patrol, were remorseful about killing the creatures. [A number of examples follow.] Several of the scenarists of the early Tsuburaya Production teleseries were culled from the Japan Science Fiction Writers Club—so, we can give ULTRAMAN a little more credit than that: the show was a little more than what you imply it having.

(...) Keep up with the Japanese stuff, especially the Mexican stuff (Santo is a childhood hero) and the more rare, obscure MONSTERS!

August Ragone  
Editor, *Markalite Magazine*  
San Francisco, CA

It is a great pleasure to hear from the editor of *Markalite*. *MJ* comes out of nowhere near the Pacific Rim and doesn't have the privileged access to Japanese studios you guys enjoy (how I wish I'd had the chance to interview Honda!), but it tries to gather and relay as much information as its resources permit. Admittedly being at a disadvantage, I'd like to comment on some of your points. In your

letter you have translated all Japanese film titles (maintaining however the original pronunciation of monster names, such as 'Baran' and 'Dogora') and put them in caps. We keep movie titles in their original language (with a translation clearly marked as such when dealing with films not distributed in English-speaking markets), or refer to their official export appellations or first-release U.S. forms—hence, 'Varan' and 'Dagora'. This is to avoid unneeded multiplication of unofficial titles (just how many different ways are there to translate a simple title?) and cut through the thicket of unqualified "a.k.a.'s that clutter some reference books nowadays.

I guess we all agree that one of the most frustrating aspects of researching Japanese film material is the *yomikae* problem: you can never be absolutely sure of how to read correctly the *kanji* ideograms that form an individual's name. (A brief explanation for the uninitiated: *kanji* ideograms can be read in a number of alternative ways—a property called *yomikae*—and parents may come up with whatever combination of characters and sounds they please for their kids' monickers. It can happen that a name is written in such an unusual way that only its bearer knows with certainty how to read it correctly. Particularly bizarre or unorthodox readings of those ideograms are sometimes clarified in publications by means of *kanafuri*—tiny *kana* (phonetic) characters printed alongside the *kanji* as a reading cue.) Add to this difficulty the hard-to-lathom policy Japanese film studios (particularly Toho) practice of being obsessively protective of information on their films—even with respect of those made long ago. Movie bookstores and other specialized outlets are glutted with copious Japanese-language literature on genre movies, but all published material (even by independent publishers) is strictly controlled by the studios and reflects "official" histories and

accounts. The problem is, many of these authorized publications themselves offer mutually contradictory information, particularly concerning background reports and correct name-readings for production personnel: so you can't absolutely trust even studio-approved chronicles and *kanafuri* cues. In addition, in Toho's particular case, the studio's foreign sales division has been notoriously incoherent over the years in their transliteration of film credits, both in their press-releases and on the actual film prints destined for international distribution: so we see mind-numbingly variant name-readings such as Inoshirō/Ishirō Honda, Teruyoshi/Akiyoshi Nakano, Sadamasa/Teishō Arikawa, Yasuyuki/Taikō Inoue, Motoyoshi/Mototaka/Sokei Tomioka, etc.—all officially sanctioned by Toho!

The usual M.O. of a translator in tackling the *yomikae* question when confronting puzzling onomastic ideograms is, in the absence of better evidence, to follow hcr/his instincts and choose the reading that "sounds" right. Honda's case is a good illustration. His given name is written with three *kanji* ideograms, the first of which reads *cho* or *inoshishi* ('wild boar'), contracted as *i*, while the others are unmistakably pronounced, jointly, *shirō*. So Choshirō or Ishirō are possible readings, but Inoshirō is the logical choice because of the collusion of *shi* sounds [*inoshishi*+*shirō* instead of *i*+*shirō*]. (Of course, no logic is to be expected from parents who name their kids at their whim.) The official studio transliteration of Honda's given name has been 'Inoshirō' throughout the '50s up to the time of KING KONG ESCAPES, after which it was abruptly shifted to 'Ishirō'—the form adopted in books and assorted publications ever since. ('Inoshirō' made a comeback in the director's collaborations with Kurosawa.) Furthermore, a Japanese film researcher who knew Honda claims that he was named Inoshirō by his parents, but the studio personnel used



NIGHT CHILD -- see page 42!



to call him Ishirō and officialized that appellation, which the filmmaker accepted. Those are "common sense" reasons to prefer Inoshirō; nevertheless, let's bow to recent usage (and to the good authority of the editor of *Markalite*) and call him Ishirō from now on—although I am at a loss to understand what made the studio divulge the "wrong" reading among Western audiences for the overwhelmingly longer part of Honda's career.

Still on *yomikae*: as a rule of thumb, *kun* or Japanese pronunciations are preferred to *on* or Chinese readings for given names. (This doesn't apply for Okinawan natives, however.) So the "natural" reading of Messrs. Arikawa and Tomioka's calling cards should be, respectively, Sadamasa and Motoyoshi (both *kun* forms) and not Teishō and Sokel (*on* variants). Again, for some unfathomable reason, those latter *on* readings emerged in print only in the past five or six years, while 'Sadamasa' and 'Motoyoshi' were the preferred forms for over two decades, all with Tōhō's blessings. In short, the whole thing is a big mess and the studios are of no help. In any case, we should definitely settle on a single reading of each name and adopt it consistently, lest non-Japanese speakers would think each variant refers to a different person. (Note to suspicious readers: Tōhō art directors Takeo Kita and Tatsuo Kita are indeed distinct individuals!) I beg to differ on your remarks about Arikawa: there is nothing inherently "effeminate" about the name Sadamasa, particularly in the choice of *kanji* ideograms. (Is Teishō a stage name? Surely his parents couldn't possibly know he would become a fighter pilot when they named him...) By the way, the two war movies you mentioned were released here as, respectively, **BOMBED PEARL HARBOR** (alternatively as **STORM OVER THE PACIFIC**) and **SIEGE OF FORT BISMARCK**; extensive footage of the former was later appropriated by Universal's all-star blockbuster **MIDWAY**.

This lack of informational coherence seems to run in and across different divisions within Tōhō studios. The shooting script of **VARAN** may refer to the creature as '*baranopōda*', but in authorized articles and on the film itself the *pi* sound is shifted so the beast is called '*baranobōda*'. (Godzilla himself was called 'Godira', not 'Gofira', in an early draft.) This kind of confusion is common: witness the name of the country fronting for the U.S. in **MOTHR**, alternatively referred to as **Rolisica** or **Rosilica**. (I suspect the original intention was to characterize the nation as a 'generic superpower' by joining **ROSHIA** [Russia] with **AMERIKA** [USA], leading to 'Roshirika' or **Rosilica**.) I understand the term 'Telegian' was made up by Tōhō's overseas publicity office: what I wondered is whether it referred to the wave-man character, to the teleporting machine, or to the teleportation process itself. **KAITEI-GUNKAN**/ATRAGON's export title was **ATORAGON, THE FLYING SUPERSUB**.

The story about **VARAN** having been a project initiated by a US TV network also came out only recently in Tōhō-authorized Japanese publications. In fact, I only read about it in Hiroshi Takeuchi's glossy but not very informative *Tōhō Tokusatsu Kanji-Eiga Daikan* (1989): all previously published books (including a tome foreworded by Honda himself, *Daitokusatsu* [1979, revised in 1980]) don't give any clue about a possible American involvement. With all due respect to you and Honda, I find the idea of an American TV network proposing the production of a Japanese monster movie in 1958 for subsequent broadcast on U.S. television, as described, extremely unlikely. If one accepts that **VARAN** was shot in black-and-white because "television standards at the time did not demand color", it is also inescapable that, at the time, production of a made-for-TV feature of any kind at all by an American network was unheard of: only in the mid-'60s network-affiliated studios started churning out telefeatures. Your account suggests that most of **VARAN** was shot in standard aspect ratio and then "blown up" to TohoScope—I suppose you mean cropping the picture on top and bottom for a pseudo-widescreen appearance, like Tōhō did for the Japanese release of the American version of **GODZILLA** in 1957. But the predominance of long-shots over medium-long-shots, the careful composition of the elements on scene (with a "busy" background filling left, right and top of the frame) and the horizontal displacement of the action surely don't hint at a crop job. As for the use of a second-string cast, I doubt the purported American TV producers then would have considered an all-Oriental cast of any caliber suitable for U.S. prime-time. I wonder if Tōhō wasn't trying to "groom" actors Kōzō Nomura and Ayumi Sonoda for stardom, as it had done more successfully with Akira Takarada and Momoko Kuchie. I also wonder if, in his statements to you, Honda wasn't thinking of the involvement of an American producer of theatrical movies: there were definitely deals made between Tōhō and AB-PT Pictures Corp. (which indeed was partially owned by ABC), concerning Americanized versions of completed Japanese monster flicks for release on the big screen, not on television.

No participation of Walter Manley Enterprises is credited in **THE GOLDEN BAT**, as it is (through its subsidiary Ram Films) in both **TERROR BENEATH THE SEA** and **THE GREEN SLIME**. (The latter was also part of the "Gamma Space Station" series—four science fiction adventures shot by Italian crews in 1965.). Could you elaborate on the other two proposed Manley/Tōci projects?

I agree the crime (thriller/science fiction) hybrid subgenre is an old staple of Japanese pulp fiction. But *henkaku tantei-shōsetsu* (I trust your spelling of the term and of *Shinseinen* magazine are typos) didn't refer only to science-fictional crime stories and

included those bogus horror plots where the supernatural is rationally explained. Although there have been sundry film versions of the works of the genre's best-known practitioner, Ranpō Edogawa, other authors didn't fare that well in that medium. As far as I know, Takatōrō (not Kotarō) Kigi's only novel to be made into a movie was *Sanmenkyō no Kyōfu* ("Horror of the Three-Sided Mirror", 1947), filmed under the same title by Seiji Hisamatsu in 1948. Movie versions of Kodō Nomura's novels are limited to those of his enormously popular Edo period mystery/quasi-horror series *Zenigata Heiji Torimonohikae* ("Heiji Zenigata's Case File", 1931-1958), adapted for the screen many times since 1932—most notably by Daiei Studios in a 15-feature series (1953-1961) featuring Kazuo Hasegawa. As for Tōhō's *henshin-kanjin* ("weird metamorphosing men") movies, only **SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN** strictly follows the rules of the *hankaku tantei-shōsetsu*: first, the science-fictional element is just a plot device (Hitchecock's "McGuffin") that facilitates the culprit's actions; second, the scope of his threat is limited to specific targets (objects of personal revenge) and he is no menace to society at large. In **THE HUMAN VAPOR**, where the McGuffin helps the disturbed main character to embark on a mission of personal vengeance... against humankind. I only suggested those three films formed a "limited series" inspired by the *Ankokugai* crime actioners—not that the idea of detective fiction+science fiction was an original concept.

On the subject of scientists' hostility to

monsters in Japanese TV superhero shows, let's not kid ourselves. The basic premise of **ULTRAMAN** and its derivatives was to have at least one monster per episode that threatened humankind and therefore must be destroyed; the superhero was supposed to deliver the final blow, but the so-called Science Patrol did the groundwork playing the role of a technological militia rather than that of a scientific research center. (This theme of heavily-armed "scientific" organizations—complete with military ranks—with potential first-strike capability is a perennial favorite in that nation legally prevented from maintaining offensive armed forces.) There may have been individual stories that eluded the formula, but by and large the scientists' priority in the Tsuburaya series was to finish off monsters: if killing the latter caused remorse "most of the time", it happened so damn often it smacked of crocodile tears. At least one low-budget competitor, P-Productions' **UCHŪ-ENJIN GORI TAI SUPEKUTORIIMAN!** **SPECTREMAN**, was honest enough to dispense altogether with the window-dressing halfway through the series, when the original Anti-Pollution Patrol was renamed **Monster-Fighting Unit**. The fact that many writers in the Tsuburaya series were accredited science fiction authors isn't in itself a recommendation, as they were compromised by format restrictions. (Compare with the non-superhero monster series **ULTRA Q** which, at its best, came close to the quality of **THE TWILIGHT ZONE**'s finest episodes.)

Of course you are correct about the "Monster X" blunder; the title is obviously **MONSTER ZERO** and eluded proofreading. As for "Entrails of a Virgin", I stand by my translation: **SHOJO NO HARAWATA** means exactly that. You are mistaking *shōjo* (少女), virgin, for *shōjo* (少女), girl. Keep up the good work in *Markalite*. — H.H.



JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS & FRIENDS -- SEE PAGE 51

## OOPS! DEPARTMENT

- Issue #1: the actor playing the evil Dr. Williams in **LA MUJER MURCIELAGO/BAT WOMAN** was Roberto Cañedo, who made suave villainy a trademark of his career.
- Issue #2: Santo's last movie is mentioned in the text on page 27 as "**SANTO EN ATACAN LOS KARATECAS**"; it should be, as correctly pointed in the filmography, **SANTO EN LA FURIA DE LOS KARATECAS**. Reader John W. Durratson informs that the Santo Gold ruse **BLOOD CIRCUS** was at least partially filmed and advertised on *Variety* in 1985 ("Expecting \$200 Million Gross!") with the intention of attracting potential suck—uh, investors for its completion.

# EXORCISMO NEGRO

Colorido

**JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS / ZÉ DO CAIXÃO**

JOFFRE SOARES · WALTER STUART · GEORGIA GOMIDE · ADRIANO STUART · ALCIONE MAZZEO  
ARIANE ARANTES · WANDA KOSMO · MARCELO PICCHI e a menina MERISOL



Produção: ANISAL MASSAINI NETO  
Fotografia: ANTONIO MELIANDE

Direção: JOSÉ MOJICA MARINS  
Edição: CARLOS COMBRA



TO THE READERS OF MONSTER! INTERNATIONAL

*Fox Mojica Moisés*  
*(Zé do Caixão)*

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